

**Washington County Teachers Association
Washington County Educational Support Personnel**

**2018 Board of County Commissioners
Candidate Questionnaire**

CANDIDATE: Elizabeth Paul

OFFICE SOUGHT: Wash. Co. Commissioner

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Friends of Elizabeth Paul,

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Elizabeth Paul DATE SUBMITTED: 8/19/18

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 questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to WCTA.

Education Funding

Background Points

- In 2002, lawmakers passed the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (also known as the Thornton Plan) based on the recommendations of the Thornton Commission. While this increased investment has helped Maryland's public schools and students achieve outstanding results and develop a reputation as a national leader, many unmet needs remain.
- The cost of educating students continues to increase. Over the last 10 years, Maryland has seen an increase in our Title I student population of 129% and limited English proficiency students of 88%. With year-to-year increases in special education needs, it is clear that the changing student population is a significant driver of costs.
- Maryland had the best schools in the nation for five years in a row from 2009 to 2013, according to *Education Week*. In 2016, *Ed Week* ranked Maryland fifth in the nation. Maryland now ranks 2nd in AP performance (2017)—after leading the nation for ten consecutive years—with 30.4 percent of Maryland graduates scoring a 3 or better on AP assessments. And Maryland's graduation rate is at 87 percent—the highest ever in the state and 3.8 percent higher than the national graduation rate.
- There is a critical need for improvement in closing education gaps, expanding programs and services, community schools, and improving student achievement.
- The governor will have a significant impact on the future funding and success of Maryland schools. Maryland's median incomes are the highest in the nation, but school spending is the 10th highest among the states and 16th highest when adjusted for regional cost differences. According to consultants hired by MSDE, Maryland schools are now underfunded by nearly \$3 billion annually. That means each of our schools, on average, is underfunded by more than \$2 million every year.
- MSEA supports legislation to update our school funding formula and policies to ensure adequate and equitable state and local education funding. Our priorities include elevating the respect and support for Maryland's educators with higher salaries and greater career opportunities, and addressing Maryland's economic inequality in our schools with programs to target concentrated poverty.

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 aid for education in your budget deliberations.

See attached.

6. I see this as more under the purview of the Board of Education, although I would do whatever I could personally and as a Commissioner to support such efforts. I would strive to have the County Commissioners work more closely and collaboratively with the Board of Education to better support and improve our education system, but that should be a joint effort. I have always been a staunch advocate of education and providing the best opportunities for children, even long before I was a teacher. That will not change.

8. Generally, contracting out services results in only a brief superficial cost-savings at best, and does so at the expense of employees. I believe in treating employees fairly because (1) it's the right thing to do, and (2) in doing so they feel a greater commitment to the organization. Outsourcing generally strips employees of benefits and a right to fair practices. Government should be a leader in equitable employment practices.

A. My priorities as a County Commissioner would be to instill transparency, ethical leadership, and a true commitment to public service. Through those overarching values and practices, I see these as areas of greatest need: education, emergency services, and economic development. Without increasing our tax base through new business/expansion and higher-paying jobs, it is difficult to maintain a reasonable standard of living while not overburdening our current residents. We need Commissioners who are creative and courageous in finding new revenue streams and aggressively seeking out new businesses to grow here, as ways to better support our county's needs, rather than continuing to ignore the growing problems.

B. As noted above, I believe we need new vision and creativity to develop new revenue streams to help with our county's growing needs in emergency services and education in particular. Changing demands and costs in both these areas over recent years means we cannot continue to do things in the same old ways. We need leaders to step up and examine our current revenue streams to see if they are adequate, fair and equitable, and how to create new sources without overly burdening any one population. At this time, I'm exploring all possible ideas to determine what might work better for our residents.

WCTA/WCESP Questionnaire

Elizabeth Paul, candidate for Washington County Commissioner

1. As a County Commissioner, I would have no control over the state funding of education but I believe we can do better at our local level. Foundational to any healthy, vibrant community are adequate public safety service, strong educational programs, well-maintained infrastructure, and economic development. Our county has struggled to grow economically, despite success by counties around us, and after years of this struggle, the other three areas noted are suffering. I will provide new leadership and new vision with a commitment to public service, transparency and integrity. Our county must find a better path forward economically to ensure all services can be adequately addressed. Education is a critical piece of that and is vital to our ongoing economic success as well as preparing our young people to be productive citizens living up to their potential.

2. I don't see educator recruitment and retention as necessarily a County Commissioner responsibility, but more one of the Board of Education. However, as a teacher for 21 years, I'm certainly familiar with the challenges facing both new and veteran educators in our current system. As a Commissioner, one of my top goals would be adequate funding for the school system. Underfunded schools will always struggle more to attract and retain quality education professionals of all types.

3. I support having a bottom on funding (i.e., Maintenance of Effort) to ensure a minimal level is always met. But minimal funding year after year is not adequate and not the goal of MoE. It represents the bare minimum required by law. A community cannot maintain high-quality schools and programs to serve its young people with the bare minimum funding for years.

4. Given the current financial struggles of our county, I do not see this as even a remote consideration just from a financial perspective. To date, I have never had anyone raise this as an idea to consider for our county. However, if it were to be suggested, I would be opposed to diverting public tax dollars from our public schools and other areas of public need.

Essay Questions

- A. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to Washington County Board of County Commissioners?

See attached

- B. What is your view of the current local tax structure? What, if any, changes would you advocate?

See attached.

Privatization

Background Points

- WCTA opposes any effort to outsource or privatize education jobs that are part of a bargaining unit. We maintain that any attempt to outsource or privatize jobs of public educators violates collective bargaining agreements because such an effort is in essence terminating or firing bargaining unit positions.
- Outsourcing and privatization efforts have threatened teacher and education support professional (ESP) jobs for years. Just in the last three years, Anne Arundel County has attempted to outsource teaching services for deaf and blind students, Talbot County has discussed privatizing transportation services, and Kent County has attempted to privatize custodial services. There currently is a multi-county effort on the Eastern Shore to outsource the hiring of occupational therapists and physical therapists to work in the schools.
- When jobs are outsourced, quality control is diminished and safety is compromised. Public employees are subject to background checks that private employers often skip. After privatizing, local school boards lose control over the individuals working in schools and have little ability to provide input on job performance.
- Privateers often use an argument of cost-savings as a means of winning contracts. The amount is often misleading because they low-ball the first year operating costs. Ultimately, they reduce hours, health care coverage, or just cut jobs. All of these steps lead to increased local unemployment and less overall money in the community.

8. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

See attached.

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 and education, youth employment, and nutrition. Each of these factors play a large role in whether students are able to learn and do well in school—making it imperative that these opportunity gaps be closed if we want to provide equitable education in our communities. According to the data collected by MSDE, 44% of Maryland public school students were enrolled for free and reduced price meals this school year (at or below 185% of poverty).
- WCTA supports the establishment of community schools, where applicable, which are designed to close these opportunity gaps by making the school a hub for essential services that students in disadvantaged communities lack.
- 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.
- WCTA 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.

7. Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

For all the reasons noted above.

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:
 - Parents' belief that they can impact what is important, necessary on behalf of their children school;
 - The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and
 - Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

6. What would you do to increase parental involvement and public support for our public schools and educators?

see attached.

Collective Bargaining

Background Points

- WCTA supports efforts to protect and enhance the collective bargaining rights.
- 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.

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

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I'm a union member and understand the importance of workers having a voice and a fair process. I served on the Negotiations Team for FCTA for a few years, and fully understand the importance.

Public Funding for Private Schools

Background Points

- WCTA believes any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to make the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student.
- 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 State Standards, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to ascertain the standards to evaluate any of the funded programs funneling public tax dollars to private schools.
- Carroll County Commissioners created a \$400,000 "Educational Opportunities Fund" to enhance and enrich the educational opportunities for home- and private-schooled students. WCTA is opposed to this type of diversion of public funding with no accountability.

4. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

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I apologize for the mess! Please see attached.

2. There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Across the state, educator salaries have been relatively flat for the last eight years. Pension benefits have been reduced but employee contributions have increased. Class sizes will increase as a result of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes, layoffs, and retirements. Support personnel positions have been eliminated. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

See attached.

3. Do you support or oppose Maryland's maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund at least the same per pupil allocation in local aid for education as the prior year unless a waiver is granted?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

See attached.