

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

**2022 Board of County Commissioners
Candidate Questionnaire**

CANDIDATE : **Sterling Sanders**

OFFICE SOUGHT : **County Commissioner**

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: **13501 Spriggs Road, Hagerstown, MD, 21742**

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: **Sterling R. Sanders Jr.**

DATE SUBMITTED: **07/11/2022**

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.

The first step for the county to address unmet needs facing our schools is to acknowledge that there are unmet needs. The Board of County Commissioners should be joining the Board of Education to take tours of each and every school to understand where all needs are and to work collectively to find solutions for each specific need. Once the Board of County Commissioners recognize the needs of the school system then I can begin to prioritize how we can fund those needs.

2. During the implementation of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, each county will need to provide money to cover their local share for the Blueprint. What is your plan to meet your county's required local share?

The Board of County Commissioners should work closely with the Blueprint for Maryland Schools Coordinator to fully understand what part the County Commissioners should play in funding.

3. There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes, layoffs, and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. The regional job market is extremely competitive, and WCPS is struggling to offer competitive compensation. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

The County Commissioners need to learn how to work collaboratively with the Board of Education. Recruitment has become difficult throughout the

entire country but especially in Washington County because after the initial salary incentive, the three bargaining groups do not get paid adequately for what they do. The County Commissioners must have an open line of communication to better understand the needs of our educators and support personnel.

4. Do you support or oppose Maryland's updated maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund the local share of all wealth-equalized formulas, instead of only the foundation formula?

Support:

Oppose:

Additional Comments: **The Board of County Commissioners should ALWAYS fully-fund the Board of Education budget.**

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

Support:

Oppose:

Additional Comments: **All tax dollars should go to public schools.**

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

Support:

Oppose:

Additional Comments: **All employee groups should have the right to collective bargaining.**

7. How will your budget address increased needs for mental health support for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?

The Board of County Commissioners should provide funding to the Board of Education so that they can provide the much needed mental health services whether it be through counselors or social workers in every school.

8. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?

I support increasing affordable housing in Washington County in relation to education because it provides a stable environment that helps to promote learning. I will work collectively with the Washington County Housing Authority and the Hagerstown Housing Authority to understand the needs for affordable housing and to find solutions to combat the issues that we have regarding affordable housing in all areas of Washington County.

9. The pandemic further illuminated the immediate need for reliable, affordable access to technology for all students and educators in our state. How would you propose to eliminate the digital divide?

I would have the Washington County administrative staff look for grant funding to provide internet access to low-income families and to increase the number of Wi-Fi hotspots throughout Washington County.

10. WCTA/WCESP supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Do you support or oppose this position?

Support:

Oppose:

Additional Comments: **I support educators having professional autonomy in their classroom but I also understand that we must focus on facts without expressing opinion.**

11. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and support?

I support the policy of equity training in WCPS and would provide the necessary resources for these programs. I also believe that the Washington County Board of County Commissioners should implement a youth advisory council made up of highschool students from each high school in Washington County so that we can better understand and address the needs of our students in terms of funding.

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

Support:

Oppose:

Additional Comments: **Community schools offer more resources to students, parents and community members to improve public-based education.**

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

I would attend functions at schools to increase public awareness of individual based issues at each school and in each community.

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

Support:

Oppose:

Essay Questions:

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

The first thing that I would like to accomplish is to simply bring a fresh set of eyes and fresh ideas to the Board of County Commissioners. Second, I would like to increase communication amongst all government departments and all elected officials. Third, I would like to develop a council of governments where representatives from each municipality, the Board of County Commissioners, the Board of Education and the Sheriff meet monthly to collectively strategize problem solving possibilities that we all face. Below I have listed my top three priorities after being elected.

- **Increase Funding for Public Education**
- **Focus on Recruitment & Retention of Public Safety Personnel**
- **Allocate Grant Funding to Implement Solar Panels on ALL County Buildings and Promote Recycling Initiatives**

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

I think that the current local tax structure makes sense but I believe more money should go to public education and public safety instead of administrative salaries. I also wouldn't be afraid to advocate for a small increase in taxes if it was absolutely necessary due to inflation.