



2026 Washington County Board of Commissioners Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Teri Pailen

OFFICE SOUGHT: **Washington County Board of Commissioners**

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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 & WCASA** reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.*

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Teri Ann Pailen _____ **DATE SUBMITTED: 3/20/2026** _____

*Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. You may use more space than is provided to elaborate on your answers and provide clarification, explanation, and other context, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to **WCTA, WCESP & WCASA***

Education Funding and Local Budgets:

- 1. Do you commit to prioritizing public education funding in future county budgets? What are your top three budget priorities for the public school system?**

I wholeheartedly support prioritizing public education funding. My primary focus areas include augmenting teacher salaries and providing comprehensive training programs. Additionally, I advocate for the enhancement of school infrastructures and the establishment of dedicated positions to monitor and manage involuntary student withdrawals. Increasing teacher salaries yields several positive outcomes. It enhances redetection efforts, boosts morale, improves performance, and positively impacts student outcomes.

Enhancing school infrastructure significantly improves student learning by providing modern facilities and healthier indoor environments. Modern buildings also enhance safety through upgrades that withstand extreme weather events. Investing in modern infrastructure yields long-term cost savings. Additionally, modern buildings require less maintenance, increase surrounding property values, and foster community engagement.

Hiring dedicated staff to monitor truant students who miss 10 or more school days and those who are involuntarily withdrawn and subsequently fall under code 50 is crucial. Beyond their well-being, it is imperative to reintegrate these children into the educational system to ensure they receive the necessary education. This proactive approach would lead to improved student outcomes and ultimately contribute to the development of a well-educated workforce.

- 2. How do you plan to fund public school priorities? What are your thoughts on the current county tax and revenue structure and any actions you would take to update the tax code to promote fairness and equity?**

School priorities can be funded through various sources, including State Funding, Federal Funding, Local Funding, Private Partnerships, and grants.

States are mandated to provide a fundamental level of education. Grants such as Title I grants, IDEA grants, and competitive grants are available. Title I Grants specifically target low-income students to enhance their educational outcomes. IDEA grants support special education services. Competitive grants are programs that schools can apply for to secure funding for innovative programs or projects.

3. How could you utilize your budget authority to address shortfalls facing our schools if the state or federal government reduces their commitment(s)?

To address the funding challenges, I propose a comprehensive approach. First, I will conduct a thorough review of the existing budget to identify potential reallocation opportunities and utilize available reserves. Second, I will explore the availability of federal and state grant programs that align with our objectives. Third, I will collaborate with other local governments to pursue joint funding initiatives for education development. Fourth, I will consider seeking funding from private organizations and engaging the community in fundraising activities. Lastly, I will continue to advocate for increased funding for public school education at the federal and state levels.

4. In many schools, educators are dealing with high class sizes and caseloads. How will you help address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention in order, to ensure we can increase staffing to reduce class sizes and caseloads?

To mitigate the issue of high class sizes, I propose implementing the following measures:

- Enhance Teacher Retention: Increase teacher salaries and provide comprehensive training programs to retain experienced educators.
- Utilize Classroom Assistants: Employ additional aides to support teachers in their instructional responsibilities.
- Recruit Student Assistants: Consider hiring students enrolled in teacher training programs as part-time aides. This approach would not

only provide these students with valuable experience but also alleviate the workload of teachers.

- Allocate Additional Time for Planning and Grading: Grant teachers additional time for planning lessons and grading assignments and tests, ensuring that they have sufficient time to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

5. **Do you commit to honoring the role of your elected body in upholding the policy and funding mandates associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?**

6.

Yes

No

Additional Comments:

Public Funding for Private Schools

7. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to non-public school students through voucher programs?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I firmly oppose allocating public school funding to non-public students. The implementation of school vouchers would result in a depletion of the necessary funding for public schools, leading to a reduction in resources and a decline in the educational quality for public school students. Furthermore, vouchers do not cover the entirety of the tuition at private schools, creating an inequity for schoolchildren who lack the option to attend private institutions. Attending private schools is a choice, and that decision should be financially supported by the parents.

8. Do you support or oppose allowing non-public school students to participate in public school extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Permitting non-public school students to participate in extracurricular activities at public schools is not equitable for public school students. These activities are funded by taxpayer dollars, and allowing private school students to participate would deplete resources for public school students. Additionally, it would limit the participation opportunities for public school students. There are also concerns about competitive balance, which could result in an uneven playing field in sports and other activities.

Collective Bargaining

9. Do you support or oppose school employees gaining the right to strike?

XXXXXX Yes SUPPORT

Additional Comments:

10. What is your understanding of the nature of the relationship between the Board of Education, Superintendent, county government, and union as it relates to negotiations, budget development, and administration of schools? How do you see yourself utilizing the power of your office in working within this structure?

The Board of Education exercises direct oversight within its specific school district by establishing policies, authorizing budgets, and evaluating the Superintendent's performance. The Superintendent assumes the role of CEO, implementing policies, managing daily operations, and ensuring the academic success of all students. The County Government reviews and approves the school budget. The Teachers Union advocates for its educators, ensuring that their voices are heard in all discussions. The Union's participation in the process influences decisions made by the Board of Education and the Superintendent regarding staffing, resources, and work conditions.

Optimal outcomes would be achieved through collaborative efforts among all stakeholders. I would schedule regular meetings with the School Board

and the Superintendent to address concerns or any issues related to the budget. Additionally, I would attend all School Board meetings to remain informed about concerns and contribute to their resolution.

11. **How do you balance honoring ratified contracts with public employees in the county, including educators, with other priorities, especially in tight fiscal times?**

To ensure the equitable treatment of ratified contracts with public school employees, I propose fostering open communication and scheduling regular meetings with school administrators and unions. When financial constraints arise in the fulfillment of the contract, I engage in discussions with both the school and the union to prioritize resource allocation

12. **Do you commit to meeting with union leadership to talk about the needs facing our schools (including salary and staffing levels) and the revenue or other budget actions necessary to meet those needs?**

Yes

No

Additional Comments:

Privatization and Support for Education Support Professionals

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

Additional Comments:

XXX No OPPOSE

School operations are vital to student success and should not be privatized

14. **Too many ESPs 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?

XXX Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I wholeheartedly endorse the ESP Bill of Rights, which seeks to guarantee equitable compensation, improved working conditions, and recognition of the invaluable contributions ESPs make to the educational landscape

14. If elected, how would you use your office to help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in the county?

To raise awareness of the Bill of Rights, I propose organizing awareness campaigns during Commissioner Meetings. Collaborate with unions and schools to garner support. Form a coalition comprising teachers, parents, community members, and the Board of Commissioners to advocate for the Bill of Rights. This coalition should engage in policy advocacy, petition circulation, and host public forums, including utilizing public comment opportunities during Board of Commissioner Meetings.

Additional Information

Along with this completed questionnaire, please provide an up-to-date bio or resume as well as a current list of endorsements for this election cycle.

Currently endorsed by the Elect Better Leaders PAC. Waiting to hear on other endorsements.