



2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE: Chuck Borges

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

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OFFICE/DISTRICT: State Senate - District 29

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Charles Joseph Borges

DATE SUBMITTED: 11 March 2026

*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 question(s) to which you refer.** Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to MSEA.*

1. Please share why you want to run for the Maryland General Assembly.

I believe we need leadership with the imagination and the initiative to create a sustainable future for our region. We need leadership that will do what is right rather than what is personally profitable. I served 22 years in the Navy, 4 years in the Civil Service, and lost my career as an SES to stand up to DOGE to protect the public. I have done my duty for my Country, and now I'd like to make a difference in the community I've called home for nearly the past 25 years. A difference that will see opportunities come to this region that grow our tax base through increased small business and innovation, and that can incentivize new jobs that can turn into careers, to make us less dependent on the federal government and more resilient to a changing economy. To pair that with housing that young professionals can afford as they move through life, making them more likely to have children and start families... and to balance that with support for families, so that parents feel less stress and children have better outcomes.

2. Please outline your top three public education priorities, how you will engage educators, and how you would achieve and measure success on each.

- 1) Full and consistent funding of MDs public schools in coordination with and through the Blueprint
- 2) Expanding Educator and ESP recruitment, retention, and compensation
- 3) Expanding mental health and total wraparound services for students and educators

I would work with educators to conduct regular listening sessions with teachers, ESPs, principals, and school counselors in every school system in the district, to better understand what is working and what isn't with the Blueprint and elsewhere. I would promote participation in an educator advisory council, which could meet semi-regularly, perhaps quarterly, to provide structured feedback on a consistent basis, as well as regularly visit schools during the workday to best assess conditions and meet with school officials.

Measures of progress could take many qualitative and quantitative forms, based on feedback, data analysis of educator-informed metrics, and other currently leading or lagging indicators of success such as the number of schools with mental health professionals on site, or increases in suspension rates. Qualitatively, I do not know if there are surveys done on educator mental health and wellness, but we need to ensure we support educators to prevent burnout.

3. Please explain how you would work with your state and local education association when faced with potential legislation relating to education issues (i.e., adequate funding, employee rights, special education, teacher certification, curriculum development, union rights, student discipline).

I recognize that the issues facing public education are complex and multi-faceted. The educators and ESPs involved in the day to day education of our kids are the ones that are most impacted by education legislation and they have the greatest knowledge of how proposed legislation could affect our schools. I will involve

educators and ESPs throughout the legislative process by listening to their concerns and ideas, and ensuring that their voices are heard early and often in the legislative process.

4. **Please provide your general and specific thoughts on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Also discuss how you would prioritize state aid for public education (K-12 and community college) when helping to craft the state budget or voting on it.**

The Blueprint is a significant investment in Maryland's public education future, and is backed by research, as every dollar invested in early childhood education generates at least 7\$ in economic return... However, political will to close MDs structural budget deficit puts continuous pressure on the Government to delay or reduce commitments in areas such as public education. This is, to put it mildly, a mistake.

When crafting budget legislation, I will work to consider the commitments made in the Blueprint a floor, not a ceiling, and work to find tradeoffs in areas such as progressive revenue reform on the extremely wealthy, closing multi-state or multi-national corporate tax loopholes (which can be done while possibly lowering the overall corporate rate to provide additional surplus while remaining competitive), as well as finding other tradeoffs in areas will be critical to ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Cuts to our education system are not cost savings, they are cost deficits that compound over time.

5. **With any large piece of legislation like the Blueprint, adjustments and amendments will be needed throughout implementation. Do you commit to work with MSEA when developing any amendment proposals to the Blueprint law?**

Agree

6. **MSEA not only represents certificated teachers, but many other educators in the school buildings. These folks are typically called Education Support Professionals (ESPs) and are made up of nine career categories: Clerical Services, Custodial and Maintenance Services, Food Services, Health and Student Services, Paraeducators, Security Services, Skilled Trades, Technical Services, and Transportation Services.**

Too many ESPs need to 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?

X Support

Please share policy priorities/initiatives that will help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in Maryland:

- 1) Establish a minimum living wage for ESPs
- 2) Ensure ESPs are represented on the MD State BoEd
- 3) Protect the jobs of ESPs by introducing or supporting anti-privitization protections. I generally oppose the privatization of any public service, as the data does not support the conclusion that the privatization of public services promotes more efficient or cost effective delivery. I would also like to ensure expanded bargaining rights for both ESPs and teachers, to include the right to strike
- 4) Support expanded funding and pathways for the Grow your Own programs

While the state is under significant budgetary pressures, we should be prioritizing education as a first funding priority, over other items such as business subsidies. Investing in our kids is investing in our future, and one of the best ways to grow a sustainable economy and future budget security.

7. How have you and how will you continue to use your position to protect Maryland educators, students, and residents in the face of threats from the federal government, including the recent rollback of rights for immigrants, the LGBTQIA community, and other marginalized communities?

In my previous position as the Chief Data Officer for the Social Security Administration, I protected the personal data of Maryland educators along with the general public. Protection of these data was paramount to me in order to preserve the rights and anonymity of marginalized communities. The exfiltration of Social Security data would cause particular exposure to immigrants, and I fought DOGE's efforts to access it without appropriate consideration to privacy. When DOGE pursued this illegal access, I went forward as a whistleblower and then, eventually, resigned from my position. I stood up for what was right and protected others at my own expense and with personal risk.

As a Maryland State Senator, I am committed to legislation that protects the privacy and equal treatment of immigrants, the LGBTQIA community, and all people, regardless of status or citizenship.

8. Mental and behavioral health continue to be a serious issue for students and educators. Research shows that an increase in mental health supports for students results in better academic performance, better attendance, and

reduced disciplinary issues. How do you believe we can increase mental health supports for school populations, including educators?

1) Support of sponsor legislation to lock in a mandatory floor for state sponsored mental health funding, to ensure it is not volatile and subject to annual budget negotiations

2) Fund training, recruitment, and loan forgiveness incentives tied to placement of school psychologists in high need areas (such as exist in my district), and support more regional cooperation (such as the interstate compact legislation in work in CY2026) to allow for better recruitment of out of state psychologists

3) Ensure the state conducts marketing and active outreach to inform families of available services, and that Medicaid reimbursement and billing are available for those services, to ensure they are better utilized with more uptake

4) Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that mental health support is seen as the cost saving measure that it is, as increased funding for mental health support will pay dividends in reduced future spending on negative outcomes for children and adults

9. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for students and educators to succeed. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?

Affordable Housing, Universal School Lunches, and other critical standards of family support are critical to reducing stress on parents, which kids perceive and carry with them throughout the day, as well as making sure we maximize the ability of families to provide a safe and comfortable environment for physical, mental, and emotional development.

As State Senator, I will reach across the Country and work to bring programs and ideas which have demonstrated success to Maryland, whether that is through providing subsidies to allow teachers and families to find housing commensurate with their life stage, the possibility of developing communal or shared housing for educational staff, or through the simplification of processes such as permitting or incentives for revitalization of buildings (a successful NY initiative) which increase the availability of mid-level housing options without undue burden on the land or regional infrastructure.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Background Points

- MSEA believes any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to achieve the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student. The vast majority of students in Maryland are served by the public schools.
- Private school funding for programs in the budget such as textbooks, technology, school construction, and vouchers reduce the state's General Fund while subsidizing the cost of private education. Data from the first few years of the BOOST program indicate that most voucher recipients already attended and paid for private school before receiving the voucher.
- 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 Readiness Standards, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to effectively evaluate the programs funneling public tax dollars to private schools.

10. How will you address state aid for private and religious schools through the nonpublic school textbook, technology, school construction, and voucher programs?

Eliminate funding for private schools

Additional Comments:

While all children deserve to have a quality education, parents who choose to educate their children outside of the public school system should have full autonomy over that choice. Thus, I do not support any state aid to private or religious schools. Church-exempt schools are subject to very little oversight from the state, and as such the state cannot guarantee that those dollars are effectively spent. Private pay schools have more oversight but often still provide religious education as part of their curriculum. I support a strong separation between church and state and therefore do not support public dollars to private schools.

Public schools continue to be the most cost effective and affordable choice for a quality, equitable education. If a parent can afford to send your child to a private or religious school, the burden should be on the parent or school to provide for those programs.

11. Do you support requiring any school (public or private) that receives public funding to adhere to policies regarding antidiscrimination, student achievement standards, school safety and discipline standards, certified teachers, employee protections, and student assessments?

X Support

Additional Comments:

I do support charter schools that allow the state to research alternative pathways for education. When charter schools operate under alternative methodologies, such as Montessori methodologies, teacher certification may be pursued through certification pathways for that methodology rather than through the conventional methods.

Charter schools should admit all students regardless of ability or special needs, remain accountable to the same standards as traditional public schools, and operate within the existing public school system structures (rather than set up parallel structures) to ensure full accountability and high standards.

HEALTHY AND SAFE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIROMENTS

Background Points

- MSEA supports funding for school construction and renovation necessary to ensure a high-quality teaching and learning environment, including construction to reduce class size and appropriate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. MSEA supports legislation establishing and funding air quality and climatization assurance programs within the school construction and renovation programs, and legislation requiring the construction and maintenance of secure facilities to protect the health and safety of education employees in the performance of their duties.
- According to the Maryland Department of Labor, prevailing wage is defined as, "The hourly wage, usually benefits and overtime, normally paid to the majority of workers, laborers, and mechanics within a particular area." Prevailing wages are established by regulatory agencies, such as government, for each public works trade and occupation, as well as by State Departments of Labor or their equals. Prevailing wage laws address shortages in skilled labor workforce by increasing apprenticeship opportunities, reducing injury rates, and increasing worker productivity. Because they ensure a stable, well-qualified workforce, prevailing wage laws produce good value for taxpayers.

12. How would you use your position in the General Assembly to make a difference in supporting a healthy working and learning environment for educators and students?

The average age of a school building in Maryland is 30 years old. This means that the average building was constructed in the late 90s, under old energy consumption codes and before the shift to more modern teaching methods such as problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and use of the Internet. In Senate district 29, eleven of our seventeen elementary schools were built before 1970. Our teachers and students are trying to learn and grow in an outdated environment that wasn't built to support current best practices. This physical environment is one of many facets that is not meeting schools' needs for a healthy working and learning environment. In my opinion, school funding is the single most important issue in the Maryland budget. As a State Senator, I will work at both the state AND federal level to fund schools for improved light and air quality, outdoor learning spaces and green spaces, and connected/shared spaces that reduce teacher isolation.

13. Do you support or oppose protecting Maryland's existing prevailing wage requirements for school construction projects?

Support

Additional Comments:

It is vital that school construction projects embody the principles of justice and equity that the entire education system seeks to instill in its students. As such, it is nonsensical to build schools while paying an unfair wage to construction workers.

Additionally, prevailing wage requirements provide consistency and retention of experienced workers, resulting in high quality construction and safer buildings for our students. Additionally, construction trades have historically been a pathway to middle class incomes for workers without college educations, and those from minority or disadvantaged households. Ensuring a prevailing wage is implemented protects that pathway to a stable income and will prevent undercutting union and apprenticeship-trained workers.

RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Background Points

- Maryland and U.S. history are far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in our public schools. Far too many Marylanders can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning or hear about themselves in the stories they read and are told. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only our students' ownership of and agency in their learning, but it also adversely impacts their overall engagement in their learning. Unfortunately Maryland is no stranger to the politicized attacks from extremist activists seeking to ban books and deny students access to resources.
- MSEA is committed to developing critical thinking skills in our students because we know that they enable them to better understand the problems our society faces and to develop collective solutions. To that end, we are abundantly clear that truth and honesty are fundamental components of teaching and learning, as are academic integrity and professional responsibility. Our essential mission is to prepare our students for college, career, and life and to play an active role in our democracy.

14. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position?

X Support

Additional Comments:

Teachers spend years in preparation and training, and then spend their careers in direct relationship with their students. No one is better positioned to understand what a particular group of learners needs on a given day than the educator standing in that classroom.

Professional autonomy does not mean abandoning curriculum standards or accountability. It means giving educators the flexibility to decide how to deliver content and how to sequence learning to **meet students where they are**. The 'what' is still managed at the state level, but the professionals in the classroom have flexibility in the 'how'.

Countries that consistently lead in educational outcomes treat teachers as trusted professionals, not delivery mechanisms for scripted content.

15. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice?

1) I will advocate for continued expansion of community school models that co-locate health services, housing assistance, food access, and family support within school buildings, particularly in historically underserved communities.

2) I will support continued and expanded investment in the Grow Your Own program to ensure we can maximally diversify the educator workforce, to ensure students of color have more opportunities to connect with teachers who reflect their own backgrounds and experiences.

3) I intend to be heavily involved in the data analysis of the Blueprint for Maryland's execution, paying close attention to how weighted per-pupil funding is calculated and implemented, and to ensure secondary factors such as geography are included, so that the quality of a child's school is not dependent on their zip code.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Background Points

- MSEA supports Maryland's current charter school law. It protects high standards, the collective bargaining rights of employees, and the local autonomy and needs of a school system. The law also provides flexibility for charter providers and employees to reach agreements outside of a collective bargaining agreement that allow the school to meet the needs of its mission and students. This combination of protections and flexibility makes Maryland's charter school law the best in the nation.
- Studies have consistently shown that although some charter schools may do well, on average, most perform about the same as or worse than traditional public schools.
- In past legislative sessions, charter advocates have championed legislation that would undermine local control of schools, including creating a 25th school district, lowering standards and accountability, and circumventing certification requirements and collective bargaining rights. Our highly ranked schools depend on keeping our standards high and our charter school law strong. MSEA believes it is necessary to continue to reject efforts to overhaul a law that works and meets the needs of students, parents, school employees, school districts, and our state.

16. MSEA supports public charter schools that are under the control of local school boards, require making enrollment open to all students, require the hiring of certificated teachers, are held to the identical high standards as traditional schools, and protect collective bargaining rights of employees hired at the school. Do you support or oppose MSEA's policy statement with regards to charter schools?

X Support

Additional Comments:

Charter schools should admit all students regardless of ability or special needs, remain accountable to the same standards as traditional public schools, and operate within the existing public school system structures (rather than set up parallel structures) to ensure full accountability and high standards.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

Background Points

- MSEA believes that guaranteeing adequate income upon retirement, which is best accomplished through defined benefit plans, serves the interests of public education and all education employees by enhancing recruitment efforts, improving retention rates, and creating a high-quality public education system. MSEA also believes that state and local employers are obligated to fund the pension system sufficiently to provide a guaranteed adequate income at retirement.

17. What reforms to the pension system do you believe could help attract and retain more educators?

Pension security is not just a retirement issue; it is a recruitment issue. In an environment where Maryland faces significant educator shortages, the promise of a secure retirement is one of the most powerful tools the state has to attract people to the profession and keep them there. Items we could address to help reform and improve the pension system include:

- Protecting the defined benefit concept from any move towards hybrid or defined contribution models
- Providing for more meaningful pension benefits early in the teaching career, as a retention incentive
- Removing any pension or time-in-service penalties for teachers who would like to move across the MD educational system

18. Do you support or oppose any action to diminish or threaten pension benefits such as reducing employer contributions or increasing required employee contributions?

Oppose

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Background Points

- MSEA supports efforts to protect and enhance the state's collective bargaining laws.
- Collective bargaining is the negotiation of a contract—including wages, salary scales, 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.
- MSEA opposes right to work laws. Such laws restrict freedom of association and weaken organized labor in Maryland. The strength of organized labor is critical to protecting workers, ensuring quality, and maintaining fairness, safety, and competitive wages in the workplace.

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

Support

20. Please indicate your support or opposition for these proposals to expand collective bargaining rights for educators:

- **Making the right to strike for public employees, including educators, legal in Maryland.**

Support

- **Giving educators the right to negotiate over class size.**

Support

- **Giving employees at 4-year public institutions of higher education the right to collectively bargain.**

Support

- **Enacting arbitration reform through binding interest arbitration so state employees have efficient and reliable dispute resolution process when collective bargaining negotiations reach impasse**

Support

TAX POLICY

Background Points

- MSEA supports a revenue structure that will provide a predictable, reliable, progressive, and stable source of sustained funding for education. MSEA is a partner in a broad coalition of advocates that support a balanced approach toward solving budget problems by meeting the needs and services of the public with adequate resources.
- MSEA supports an equitable means of maintaining and restoring revenue or of raising and obtaining a fair share of additional revenues that directly or indirectly benefit public education at all levels. Further, MSEA opposes any taxing or spending limitations that directly or indirectly have an adverse effect on public education.

21. Do you support or oppose a balanced approach toward solving budget problems and ensuring adequate resources for funding education such as updating and revising the state income tax structure, broadening the state sales tax, and closing corporate tax loopholes?

Support

Additional Comments:

Maryland's income tax structure has not been meaningfully updated in decades, and a modernized, progressive approach where those with the greatest means contribute proportionally more is both fair and fiscally responsible. Similarly, our state sales tax was designed for an economy built around physical goods, not the digital services and products that dominate today's marketplace. Broadening the base to reflect how Marylanders actually spend their money should be under consideration.

On the corporate side, we need to simplify the tax code to close loopholes that allow large corporations to shift profits out of Maryland and avoid their fair share of taxes. Maryland's small businesses, which cannot exploit these same loopholes, compete at a disadvantage when large corporations pay little to nothing in state taxes. The revenue generated through these balanced measures can protect our commitments to public education, educator compensation, and the mental health and wraparound services our students depend on.

22. Please discuss how you would update the tax code to promote fairness and equity.

In addition to the above comments, in closing corporate tax loopholes, ensuring a fairer sales tax structure, and increasing the progressivity of our tax code, I would work to expand and strengthen Maryland's Homestead Tax Credit and Renters Tax Credit, which would provide meaningful relief to the working families who make up the majority of school communities, including many educators themselves who struggle to afford housing in the communities where they teach.

I would also like to support legislation that includes a modest tax on high-value inherited real estate above an exemption threshold, closing a significant generational wealth loophole, and ensuring that the taxable value of inherited property is based on market value rather than original purchase price. This will reduce a racial disparity which is significant and well documented.

23. Please discuss any ideas you have for giving local governments more flexibility in how they can raise revenue to fund services like public schools.

Local governments may be allowed flexibility in raising revenue for schools, including charging rental fees or dual use patterns for school facilities, pursuing additional tax policies that benefit schools, or selling local bonds for school improvement projects. However, my major concern about local governments being given flexibility to raise revenue is to ensure that the revenue is appropriately distributed within the district. In 2021, St. Mary's County Commissioners approved the installation and maintenance of turf fields for all three high schools, while simultaneously cutting funding for school arts programs. This benefited a small group of high school students at the expense of elementary school student enrichment. If local governments are to be given more flexibility in raising funds for education, those funds should be accompanied by accountability for spending that considers equitable allocation to all students.