



The Baltimore Educator

The official publication of the Baltimore Teachers Union

American Federation of Teachers

Affiliated With

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

Does Grant This Charter

to the

CHARTER APPLICANTS

(NAMED ON BACK OF THIS DOCUMENT)

and to their successors legally qualified, to constitute the Local Union herein named and known under the title of

BALTIMORE TEACHERS UNION-#340

Jurisdiction:

BALTIMORE CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM

for the purpose of a thorough organization of the teachers of America, and the promotion of the objects set forth in the Constitution of the American Federation of Teachers.

Provided that the said Union do conform to the Constitution, Laws, Rules and Regulations of the American Federation of Teachers, in the knowledge that the default thereof, or any part, by said Union, may be cause for suspension or revocation of this Charter.

And further, in consideration of the due performance of the above, the

American Federation of Teachers

does hereby bind itself to support this Local in the exercise of all its rights and privileges as an affiliated Union.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hand and affixed the SEAL of the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS.

this 1ST day of SEPTEMBER, A. D. 1934

President.

Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the BTU

Hear Us Roar, Since 1934!

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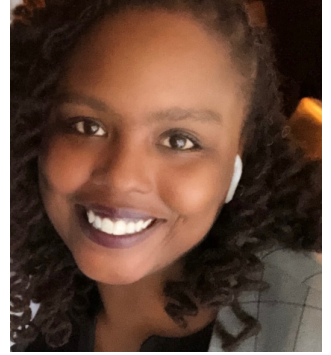
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A Note From President Brown

Dear Members,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! You may not know it, but this school year holds a very special significance for the Baltimore Teachers Union. 2024 marks the 90th anniversary of the chartering of the Baltimore Teachers Union, Local #340 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The BTU was chartered in 1934 by seven teachers who believed that they and their colleagues needed a way to organize and better their working conditions and their lives.



On the BTU website there is a page that does not get much traffic. The data shows it is one of the least visited pages on the website, but it may be one of the most important. It is the page that speaks of our BTU history and mission. I want to share with you some of that history:

“The Baltimore Teachers Union, American Federation of Teachers Local #340, was organized in 1934 in order to give teachers a greater role in educational policy-making. Previously other teachers’ organizations had focused on issues such as curriculum and teaching tools. The seven teachers who chartered the BTU believed that a teachers’ union should be actively involved in bettering their working conditions and providing quality education for children. Kenneth Douly was elected the first president.

Thus, the BTU was chartered on that philosophy, and its membership was built around securing collective bargaining rights. The BTU was one of the first groups to utilize public forums such as school board meetings, state legislative hearings and community meetings to call attention to the problems of inner-city education...

During the early 1960’s, the BTU continued its struggle for teachers to gain input in determining their wages and working conditions. Teacher salaries and fringe benefits were dominant issues. The Union continued to grow more militant in its demands for participation in determining salaries and working conditions. The militancy culminated in the membership voting to go out on strike in 1967. The victory of that historic strike resulted in city teachers gaining the right to collective bargaining and the ability to negotiate wages hours and working conditions for the first time. That victory paved the way for the rest of the teachers in the state to get collective bargaining as well.

In addition, BTU became the collective bargaining agent for paraprofessionals in 1968 and negotiated the first contract for paraprofessionals in 1970. As the role of teachers and paraprofessionals has changed over the past 50 years, the BTU has moved beyond collective bargaining issues and has spearheaded education reform initiatives in Baltimore City...

In 2010, the BTU added more than 500 new members to its Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel ranks; the new members represented more than 100 classifications of employees... BTU also negotiated its first contract for the paraprofessional and school related personnel chapter in 2010.”

Throughout this school year, the BTU will be celebrating and honoring our 90 years of history. We will use the stories of the past to inspire us to fight for a future that is progressive, equitable, and joyful.

Our organizing theme for the year is **“Hear Us Roar, Since 1934!”** We will be sharing glimpses into the BTU’s history with archival photos and memorabilia. We want to celebrate our rich history while honoring the work every BTU member is currently doing to build towards a better future.

You are the strength and future of the BTU. I hope that someday the work we are doing now will be looked up and revered as we look upon the previous decades of activism and organizing. We are in a generational fight to secure our right to comfort, safety and security, but I trust that every BTU member is able and willing to rise to the occasion the way BTU members have done time and time again.

In solidarity,

President Diamonté Brown

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The Baltimore Educator is the official magazine of the Baltimore Teachers Union. It is published by the BTU Communications Committee. BTU members are encouraged to submit articles of 1,000 words or less by emailing mpesa@baltu.org. Organizations interested in placing an advertisement in the Baltimore Educator may also contact us at the address above. The submission deadline for the next issue is December 20,

2024. Read the Baltimore Educator online at

<https://www.baltimoreteachers.org/category/newsletter/>.

Know Your Contract: Teacher Sub Pay

By Kelly Hope, BTU Field Organizer

During negotiations for the latest Teacher Chapter Contract (2023-2026), a provision for sub pay was added for teachers. A teacher can now be paid if they give up their planning period to substitute for another class. Please keep in mind that the language says “planning period”. This does not cover split classes or combining your class with another class if you are not on your planning period. Teachers who cover a class during their planning period are paid the compensated stipend hourly rate found in 5.1 H. Currently that stipend rate is \$53.18 per hour.

Other things to keep in mind.

1. Do not cover a class unless administration or the person in charge of assigning subs for the principal has told you to substitute.
2. Sign in the substitute book.
3. For your own records, keep track of the date you subbed, the teacher class you covered, and the class period you covered.
4. Verify you were compensated on your paycheck.
5. If you were not paid, speak to your administrator. If they don't want to pay you, contact your BTU Field Staff.

Article V- Compensation and Related Matters

5.1 Compensation

Wage Rates

All work performed for stipends and summer pay shall be paid at the rate of \$53.18 per hour in fiscal year 2024 and at a “workshop” rate of \$42.54 per hour for attending professional development which is not subject to a different rate as a part of an SBO or MOU. These rates shall be increased for FY23 by the same percentage cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that is agreed to in paragraph (A)(1) above for FY23 salaries for bargaining unit members.

1. Upon completion of the new Oracle Fusion payroll system, the Board shall make every effort to identify and differentiate stipend payments.

Article VII

Teacher Hours and Working Conditions

7.8 Class Coverage

A. Teachers, including but not limited to classroom teachers, special area teachers, and clinicians, shall not be required to take another teacher's classes except in an emergency. Examples of an emergency are the following: a sudden illness of a teacher during the school day, or awaiting the arrival of an obtained substitute, and other situations mutually accepted by the teacher and the principal.

B. Bargaining unit members who give up assigned planning time to provide coverage for a class shall be compensated at the stipended hourly rate established in 5.1.H. Eligibility for this stipend will start 60 days following ratification of this agreement.

Remember, the most updated Teacher Contract language can be found at the BTU website:

<https://baltimoreteachers.org/teacher-contract>

ULR's Corner:

The Union Learning Representative Program



By Catrina Sally

Created to support the 2010 Teacher Career Pathway initiative, the Union Learning Representative (ULR) program was designed to encourage the educational and professional growth of staff, while positively impacting our students, colleagues, schools, and district. Every year, representatives spent over 40 documented hours alerting colleagues to compensation, benefits, promotions, and professional development resources. As another facet of union representation, ULRs frequently empowered members to foster meaningful career paths and to take part in and/or develop impactful programming for students.

I served as the Union Learning Rep of Cross Country Elementary Middle School. Serving in this position was challenging and rewarding. It forced me to become familiar with both the mundane and complex aspects of not only our union membership but also our roles as lifetime learners. One important observance from this time of service: We are all ignorant to some degree of our rights and privileges as members of the BTU. We also work for a system that is skillful in exploiting this ignorance. ULRs have been important tools in closing the knowledge gaps

that often left our colleagues with too little pay, useless degrees, stagnant career paths, and a host of other avoidable issues.

Unfortunately, The ULR program as we know it was voted down and decertified by BCPSS. The system also refused to provide compensation for the role, thus turning it into a volunteer position. Because of this, the ULR program has become a shell of its former self. While we may no longer (for the time being) have a thriving ULR system, we are all capable of carrying on the spirit of the program via the performance of meaningful acts of service for our colleagues.

I hate the cliché, but teamwork truly makes the dream work. Help a colleague out whenever you can—especially as we navigate this new career pathway arc. Look out for new educators and provide them with information about their rights as educators and resources to help make their experiences easier. Leading with service and removing career barriers was the heart of our ULR program. Now it's up to our membership to keep that beat.

To learn more about the future of the ULR program, contact Nathan Ferrell: nferrell@baltu.org

PSRP Update



By Keysha Goodwin, PSRP Engagement Specialist

PSRPs work diligently in all areas of the school district. Hence, some paraeducators are seeking clarity and insight for their position beyond the job description to enhance their performance. Some points of information entail special education staffing ratios, program descriptions, and education standards. Educators can provide an adequate and appropriate education when their school is fully staffed, has the necessary equipment/supplies, and provides clear guidance to staff.

Here is a snapshot of the Office Of Special Education Staffing Plan to provide insight into the special education programs in City Schools. Annually, the district gathers input from stakeholders to report to MSDE on a special education staffing plan for BCPSS. Be on the lookout for this survey. Note that there is no staffing plan for self contained/small group setting in traditional schools.

Services	Description and Services Delivery	Locations	# of Positions
Child Find	Child Find program works to identify, locate, and evaluate children and young people, from birth through 21 years of age, who may have disabilities and need interventions, special education, or related services. Disabilities may be in the areas of: • Vision • Hearing • Health • Behavior Special needs may involve: • Fine or gross motor development and skills • Speech/language development and skills • Cognitive or learning functions • Social and emotional development and skills • Adaptive or self-help skills	Central Office	1
Separate Public Day Schools	When the severity or nature of students' disabilities affects their performance and academic success within their community-based school setting, placement in a separate public day school may be appropriate, as determined by an Individualized Education Program team. City Schools' separate public day schools provide programming, facilities, and specialized staff to meet students' needs.	Claremont Middle/High School Lois T. Murray Elementary/Middle School Joseph C. Briscoe Sharp-Leadenhall Elementary/Middle School The William S. Baer School	1 Teacher; 2 Para

Citywide Supports: Program for Autistic Learners (PAL)	The PAL supports are designed to prepare students with Autism to be career ready, independent learners that are able to be self-sufficient, communicative, and socially acceptable productive members of society. Supports have been structured to meet the needs of students with Autism by creating a learning environment that utilizes a functional academic support, Essential Understandings, the Next Generation Science Standards, and a Structured Setting to allow students to work in small groups or 1:1 teaching scenarios, practice mastered skills in group and independent work areas, and provide structured break times to assist with short attention spans.	Elementary School Programs: Abbottston Billie Holiday Beechfield Dr. Bernard Harris Federal Hill Furley Hilton North Bend Park Heights Academy Southwest Baltimore Charter Westport Middle School: Beechfield Stadium School Vanguard Westport High School Programs: Augusta Fells Savage Edmondson Paul Laurence Dunbar	Elementary Ratio 10:1 (1 Para) Middle & High Ratio 12:1 (1 Para)
Citywide Supports: Life Skills	The Life Skills Program is designed to provide instructional support to students with intellectual disabilities who have concurrent deficits or impairments in adaptive functioning in at least two of the following areas: self-care, home living, social/ interpersonal skills, self-direction, work, leisure, health, safety, and use of community resources. The instructional emphasis is on the academic content areas with an integration of activities of daily living that are needed to support functioning in the home, school, community, and at work. Programs teach lessons aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards through the identified Essential Understandings and new Next Generation Science Standards.	Elementary Schools: Armistead Gardens Bay Brook Callaway Hampden Hilton Walter P. Carter Windsor Hills Middle Schools: Francis Scott Key Hampden National Academy Foundation (NAF) Pimlico Stadium Walter P. Carter Windsor Hills High Schools: Ben Franklin ConneXions REACH! Edmondson Patterson Mergenthaler Reginald F. Lewis National Academy Foundation (NAF)	Elementary Ratio 10:1 (1 Para) Middle & High Ratio 12:1 (1 Para)

Inclusive Education Pre-K thru Grade 12 Education	Continuum of services for SWD are provided within each comprehensive school. Services can be provided in the general education setting for a portion of the school day or the entire school day with supports and services as identified on the IEP.		
Transition Services	The Transition Unit provides school-based training to staff and students in self-advocacy, work-based learning options for employment opportunities. The monitoring of SPP 13 activities to support post-secondary options such as employment, college, and careers. This unit spearheads both Transition Fairs to ensure that students are connected to agencies with post secondary options.	Central Office	
PRIDE	The PRIDE supports are designed to build student capacity in managing behaviors by providing comprehensive services in a structured and consistent instructional environment. The services are intended to increase prosocial behaviors and application of coping strategies to manage emotional and behavioral responses while engaging in grade appropriate core curricula, with the goal of increasing appropriate behaviors and independence so that students return to an inclusive educational environment.	Elementary Schools: Edgewood Harford Heights Moravia Park Middle Schools: Hazelwood Katherine Johnson High Schools: ACCE Digital Harbor Forest Park Frederick Douglas	Elementary Ratio 10:1 (1 Para) Middle & High Ratio 12:1 (1 Para)
Early Learning Inclusive Programs	Let's Grow 3 (specialized inclusive Preschool for students too young for Pre-K) - Children with and without IEPs work together, learning in a structured and language rich environment with evidence-based teaching strategies designed to help students meet developmental milestones. Students with disabilities make up 50% of the classroom. Partners (PreK/K program) - The program offers a full-inclusion setting for children with autism or developmental delays who show emerging social, communication, and academic skills. Students participate in a general education classroom with an additional para educator for the majority of the day and receive additional support for part of the day through a special education co-teaching model. Let's Grow Preschool, PreK/K - Children with IEPs work in small group settings outside of general education for approximately half of the school day and push into general education the other half of the day to work together with peers on social foundations as well as academics.	Preschool (3-4 yr. old) Programs Calvin Rodwell Federal Hill Armistead Gardens Dorothy I. Height Billie Holiday Lakewood Walter P. Carter Westport Edgewood Pre-k/ K Partners: Arlington Ft. Worthington Southwest Baltimore Charter Moravia Park Lakewood Furman L. Templeton Glenmount Dr. Bernard Harris	Preschool (3-4 yrs. old) Programs 9 Teachers 9 Paras Pre-k/ K Programs Partners: 8 Teacher 16 Paras

If you have any further thoughts or questions about your program, please reach out to Keysha Goodwin or your field representative. Please get involved by stating you are interested in joining the Special Education Committee (email specialeducationcommittee@baltu.org) and/or the PSRP Committee (email psrpcommittee@baltu.org).

Attention Members!

Did you know your local membership also entitles you to member benefits through the AFT and AFL-CIO?



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AFT Members are Protected.

Identity Theft and other related crimes can be devastating. The ID Theft Assistance program through AFT+ provides comprehensive: legal, financial, and ID theft resolution services. You have one point of contact for all your ID theft resolution needs. Our services can save you thousands of dollars in legal expenses and countless hours of your valuable time.

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Visit: www.aft.org/member-benefits for information about insurance, mortgage, education, discounts, and more.

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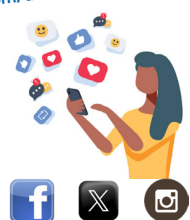


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PSRP Spotlight: Gail Bush

Gail Bush has worked as a bus aide for Baltimore City Public Schools for the past 23 years. She currently serves as the Building Rep for the bus lot. She has also served as a volunteer at Lakewood Elementary School when her children were in grade school.

Can you describe the responsibilities of a bus aide? What does your average workday look like?

The responsibilities of a bus aide include transporting students with disabilities to and from their home to their designated schools. I report to work and my assigned bus at 6:00 AM. From this point we begin our AM run. Some students use a wheelchair, and some are required to have car seats and harnesses. It is my responsibility as a bus aide to make sure that each student is properly secured with whatever equipment is needed.

Once the student arrives at the designated school, I assist them in disembarking from the bus in a safe manner and release them to the school coordinator. I then sign in at the school, return to the bus, drive back to the transportation lot, and fill in as needed. Sometimes we may have to return to pick up students that were left behind. Once we know that all students are clear, we start our break between 9:00 AM and 9:30 AM. At around 1:30 PM to 2:00 PM this process is reversed. We return to the schools to pick up the students and take them home. Buses are cleaned in the morning as well as the afternoon. We also have mid-day runs and field trips.

You serve as the Building Rep for the bus lot and you built a Union Chapter Committee at your worksite. What challenges did you face in that process and how did you and your co-workers overcome those challenges?

As a Building Rep and Union Chapter Committee member at my worksite, some



challenges faced by myself and my co-workers include dealing with parents, as well as school personnel. These challenges are overcome by discussing our issues with management, as well as with the schools. We have to make sure that the students' wheelchairs and other equipment are functioning properly. If the equipment needs to be repaired or replaced we advise school personnel.

What are some unique issues or concerns that bus aides and other transportation-related workers in City Schools deal with?

Some unique issues that have to be dealt with by bus aides and transportation-related workers include students with behavioral and medical problems, and communicating with parents in a professional manner.

What's the one thing you most want other BTU members to know about bus aides?

The one thing I most want other BTU members to know about bus aides is that we are people who deserve respect and recognition for jobs well done.

This is the 90th anniversary of BTU. What lessons do you think we can learn by looking back at the history of our union?

The BTU needs to continue to allow members to provide input and voice their concerns, which should be addressed in a timely manner.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

My tenure as a bus aide and a Building Rep has been very rewarding. Thanks for allowing me this opportunity.

Teacher Spotlight: Tracey Chester

Tracey Chester teaches third grade ELA, SEL and social studies at Liberty Elementary. She has taught at the same school since 1986.

What other schools have you worked in and what grades/subjects have you taught?

Liberty was and is my only building assignment since my date of hire. I previously worked for the Maryland Rehabilitation Center and then at St. Francis Head Start while in college. I began employment at Liberty as a Kindergarten teacher in the morning and a Reading/Math tutor for first grade students in the afternoon. I later was moved to full day first grade classroom teacher, then switched to second grade ELA at year fifteen. I taught grade 2 ELA for 22 years and was moved to grade 3 ELA just this school year!

What are some things that have changed about teaching in Baltimore City over the years and what has stayed the same?

For me, I believe the most pertinent thing that has changed is the use of technology. For the more recent college graduates and my colleagues, a lot of the focus of their classes have been taught and practiced through technology and all that it offers. However, for me, the basic focus was grade books, charts, chalkboards and pencil and paper assignments. Now there are Google Slides, Smart Boards, personalized learning through Amplify and Zearn, etc. And let's not mention teaching through the COVID pandemic! The student body and population have certainly changed, yet have somewhat remained the same. Students in elementary school are now struggling to read, write and count while dealing with the increasing numbers of death, poverty and mental and emotional traumas surrounding them daily. Yet, each student who enters the



doors of a Baltimore City school is bringing to the classroom a miraculous work of God's hands, capable of learning, and worth being taught.

What keeps you coming back to the classroom year after year?

When I think about what brings me back year after year, my first thought is 'I LIKE WHAT I DO!'. There are times when I think I'm finished with this journey of teaching but then I run into a former student who tells me that he/she enrolled his/her own child at Liberty because of me being their teacher years ago; and then that

child ends up in my class. Retirement is coming soon, I'm pretty sure, but for now...I'm happy doing what I do.

This year is the 90th anniversary of BTU. What are some memorable moments in our union's history during the time that you've been a member?

I do remember when the BTU negotiated a new contract for Baltimore City teachers which introduced advancement of teachers based on their specific career pathways and not the previous traditional step and salary increases. I also keep myself updated about salary changes, healthcare plans and participating in voting during election periods.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I am honored to be featured in the BTU Member Spotlight.

BTU Shout-outs

- I want to shout out the incredible **David Carey** from Holabird Academy! He is an amazing K teacher who consistently has the best data in the city. Outside of the classroom he is always working... leading district PD, coaching, mentoring, and working within the foster care system. He is truly a blessing to our system!
- A huge shout-out to **Ms. Loida Gayatgay** at Vanguard Collegiate Middle School who is an exceptional educator and model teacher. She goes above and beyond for her students in the Citywide Program (students with autism) being sure they are equipped and ready to learn daily. Her students, parents, colleagues at her school and friends in the district love her. (From Mr. D. Moore)
- A special shout-out to **Darrell Moore** for knowing his role as a Special Education paraeducator, but understanding his purpose, and knowing when to step out into a new role to better support the students.
- A special shoutout to **Mrs. Jacqueline Sterling** serving as the IEP Chair at The Stadium School where she has continued to play an active role in rebuilding the Special Education department and as a role model to many staff members.
- **Destiny Williams** is an amazing school counselor at Baybrook (From Jordan Fowler)
- **Ms. Jones** is a blessing to our little learners!
- Shout-out to **Tracey Whitehead**!
- Shout-out to **Darrell Moore**! Always supportive and goes above and beyond for his students and colleagues.
- I would like to shout out **April Whitehead**, who's a PSRP Literacy Tutor at Mount Royal. Keep being that positive difference that's making a big difference in the lives of the children you serve each day. (From fellow PSRP Natasha Butler)
- **Ms. Tracy** has been a dedicated district employee for nearly 40 years. Her passion and ambition for the community and her school are immeasurable.
- Great job **Mrs. Lisa Jones**! 25 years and going!
- Shout-out to **Rosie Hicks**—NAF 421—for being an amazing IEP Chair. She goes above and beyond for her students and staff. She truly has a heart for children.
- Shout-out to **Carla McCoy**—NAF 421—Shout out to Carla for being an amazing educator. She has over 30 years of experience and is willing to share her expertise with others. Thank you for all you do!
- Shout-out to **Antoinette Watkins, Delores Watkins, and Shanequae Witherspoon**!
- Shout-out to **Mr. George Roycroft** at NAF! You do an amazing job as a teacher. Working with middle school can be tough. However, you make it look easy.
- **Grace** is an all around good person. She works for her children to excel. Go Grace! You deserve some praise.
- Shout-out to **Patricia Rose** at the Reach Partnership High School for the amazing work she does with our scholars!
- Shout-out to **Grace Jones** at Leith Walk! She's a veteran educator and ray of sunshine! (From Timothy Ferrell)
- Shout-out to **Rob Hewes** at BLSYW! He's a veteran educator, mentor, physics guru, thespian, music man and all around amazing teacher! (From Nathan Ferrell)
- As we reflect on our union's history, let's also remember all the union siblings we have lost. **Deborah Knowles** was a longtime PSRP building rep at Patterson H.S. and an incredible human being who recently passed away. She will be deeply missed. (From Mike Pesa)

BTU joins families and students to fight for language access and improved school safety

By Nathan Ferrell,
Christ Patterson,
Rebecca Yennawine,
Tyrone Barnwell
and Mirian Jara



This year AROS connected with a total of 50 schools. In a district of 160 schools, this represents significant reach. We received media attention both in the Baltimore Sun and on Channel 2 ABC News.

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) is a group of teachers, parents and students who fight for the public schools we deserve. The Baltimore Teachers Union works in coalition with AROS members to center grassroots community organizing in our collective fight for an equitably funded and quality public education system.

This year, BTU members supported AROS partners to develop a seven week curriculum to allow parents to understand their power at the school, district and state-level. Our curriculum is so effective, it is now being used in two other cities with AFT affiliates. We trained and supported over 80 parents and educators who went through our series and engaged in advocacy at the school board, state level and in organizing at their schools.

Over 20 AROS parents testified at school board meetings in the last six months. Eleven Spanish speaking parents testified about the need for better language access and more bi-lingual staff, resulting in the district scrambling to make this a priority. Fourteen parents testified at the state-level in support of a bill that would bring restorative practices to every school in Maryland. In partnership with BTU, bargaining for the common good around school safety issues, three parents testified about the need for more support and follow up resources for addressing the root cause of bullying.

AROS Baltimore's goals for the coming school year include:

- Join the AFT campaign to fight voucher expansion by opposing Maryland Senate President Bill Ferguson's attempt to use public tax dollars to fund private school voucher schemes
- Repeat our seven week series in Spanish and English with four new cohorts
- Sustain organized groups of parents through monthly meetings to explore and strategize around policies which align with parent concerns
- Work with the sponsors of the restorative practices bill from the 2024 legislative session to improve the bill and re-introduce it in the 2025 session
- Expand our partnership with the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to provide "Know Your Rights" sessions in Spanish about language access in City Schools

BTU members can share opportunities with their school community, like the AROS monthly meetings and workshops, as we build power to achieve the schools our students deserve! Email Nathan Ferrell at nferrell@baltu.org or call (443) 799-1714 to get involved.

AFT National Convention: Reflection and a Call to Action



By Patrice Pilgrim-Wright

Attending the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) national convention in Houston, Texas, for the first time this past July was an eye-opening and transformative experience. As I walked into the convention hall, I was immediately struck by the energy and sense of purpose that permeated the atmosphere. The gathering of thousands of educators from all over the country, coming together to discuss critical issues, advocate for change, and build solidarity, was nothing short of inspiring and I was eager to get down to business! One of my main takeaways from the convention was the deep commitment of educators to not only their students but also to the broader labor movement. Throughout the event, there were multiple sessions focused on issues such as social justice, educational equity, and workers' rights. The conversations were passionate and forward-thinking, centered on how we can work together to create lasting, systemic change in our schools and communities.

For me, one of the highlights was the opportunity to engage in discussions about the role of unions in the 21st century. Lee Krempel,

a fellow attendee, shared his insight, saying, "I hoped to get even more comfortable with understanding the role of BTU in the larger AFT, who our ally locals are, and how to build 21st-century union power. I also was eager to see our joint resolution with CTU (Chicago Teachers Union) pass, which it did." This sentiment echoed throughout the convention, as many attendees were eager to explore how unions can remain relevant and effective in today's rapidly changing educational and political landscape. In addition to the sessions, the convention was a powerful reminder of the importance of solidarity. Joy Bacon, another attendee, expressed this beautifully: "I really try to both speak up for BTU in national issues but also get a sense of how our lived experiences fit into the broader labor movement and build solidarity and relationships across multiple sectors." It was clear that while our experiences as educators and local union members may differ depending on our geographic location or the specific challenges we face, there is a shared commitment to improving the lives of all workers and students.

The convention also offered opportunities for personal reflection and growth.

For example, Kimberly Hescox Mooney attended the convention with a specific goal in mind. She stated, “I wanted to push for resolution language to support LGBTQ teachers and students and international teachers because of the inequitable experience these populations have in our schools. I feel like I accomplished some of what I wanted to accomplish, but the real work comes in organizing and implementing resolutions in our own locals.” Her focus on advocacy for marginalized groups was a powerful reminder that while the convention is an important platform for raising issues, the real work happens when we return to our local communities and continue the fight for justice and equity. Throughout the event, the theme of change was ever-present. Whether it was discussions about new strategies for addressing the teacher shortage, improving working conditions, or ensuring equitable access to resources for all students, or even the addition of new locals to the AFT national family, there was a collective understanding that maintaining the status quo is not enough. As Leilani Jones put it, “Many locals understood that to be the change we wish to see, maintaining the status quo would not work. Several unions came out to speak up, vote, and work together for the betterment of all workers and unions.” Her reflection captures the essence of the convention: real change requires collective action, collaboration, and a willingness to challenge the systems that no longer serve our colleagues, students or fellow educators.

The convention wasn’t just about resolutions and speeches, though; it was also a place for making meaningful connections. I was fortunate to meet educators from all over the country, each with their own unique experiences and perspectives. These conversations helped broaden my understanding of the challenges that are facing our profession and offered new ideas and strategies for tackling them. It was inspiring to see so many people come together, not just to talk, but to actively work toward solutions. One of the most powerful moments of the convention for me was witnessing the collective power of educators as they stood together in solidarity. Whether it was rallying for increased funding

for public schools, advocating for better working conditions, or supporting policies that promote educational equity, the convention was a reminder of the strength of the union and the importance of standing together to fight for what is right.

As I reflect on my experience at the AFT convention, I am filled with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. The issues we discussed are not new, but the energy and commitment I witnessed gave me hope that change is not only possible but within reach. The resolutions we passed, the conversations we had, and the connections that we made will serve as the foundation for the work that lies ahead. For first-time attendees like myself, the convention was both a learning experience and a call to action. It was an opportunity to see firsthand the power of collective action and to be reminded that we are part of a larger movement fighting for the rights of educators, students, and workers everywhere. The work we do in our classrooms and communities matters, and the convention was a powerful reminder that we are not alone in this fight.

As we return to our respective locals and continue the work, I am reminded of Kimberly Hescox Mooney’s words: “The real work comes in organizing and implementing resolutions in our own locals.” The convention may be over, but the fight for justice, equity, and better working conditions continues. My fellow delegate Doleen Holley put it well when she said “Delegates do the work we do as a labor of love, and there is honor in our work.” I am proud to be part of a union that is not only dedicated to these goals but is actively working to make them a reality. The experience has left me with a sense of optimism and determination, knowing that together, we can create the change we wish to see.

Patrice Pilgrim-Wright is a BTU member who was elected to serve as a delegate to this year’s state and national AFT conventions. During the state convention, she was also elected to the Executive Board of AFT Maryland.



The Baltimore Teachers Union

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Upcoming BTU Events & Meetings

Sep 2024

Sep 2 - Labor Day
Sep 6 @ 5:00pm - General Membership Meeting
Sep 10 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
Sep 12 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
Sep 24 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
Sep 25 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting

Oct 2024

Oct 7-11 PSRP Appreciation Week
Oct 8 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting
Oct 10 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
Oct 17 - Early Release Day
Oct 18 - Professional Development Day, QuEST Conference
Oct 22 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting
Oct 23 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting
Oct 29 - Early Release Day

Nov 2024

Nov 4 - Professional Development Day
Nov 5 - Election Day
Nov 12 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting

Nov 14 @ 6:00pm Executive Board Meeting
Nov 18 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting
Nov 26 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting
Nov 27 - Wellness Day
Nov 28-29 Thanksgiving Break

Dec 2024

Dec 4 @ 5:00pm - General Membership Meeting
Dec 10 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting
Dec 11 @ 8:00pm - BTU Holiday Party
Dec 12 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
Dec 16 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting
Dec 23-31 Winter Break

Jan 2025

Jan 1 Winter Break
Jan 9 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
Jan 14 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting
Jan 17 - Early Release Day
Jan 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan 22 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting
Jan 28 @ 5:30pm - School Board Meeting