



2016 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Kathleen Matthews

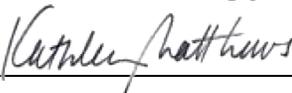
Office Sought: Congress, MD-08

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These are my official positions in seeking federal office.

Candidate Signature: 

Date: 11/6/2015

Candidates: Please 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 your NEA state affiliate.

Please return a completed questionnaire no later than Friday, November 6, 2015 by email to the attention of Sean Johnson, sejohnson@mseanea.org.

Section I. Opportunity Begins with Great Public Schools for Every Student

A. Equity for All Students

BACKGROUND

- More than 14.7 million children in the United States—20 percent of all children—live in poverty. These children would not have the supports they need to succeed without consistent, targeted federal resources. (Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#), 2014)
- Some states and districts spend two to three times more per pupil than others, and that will persist without strategies designed to ensure that students have equitable access to resources. (Source: [For Each and Every Child](#), Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013)
- “The educational achievement gap in the United States exists in and out of the classroom, and extends from the earliest years of childhood across the lifespan.” (Source: [The Academic Achievement Gap](#), Campaign for Educational Equity, 2005)
- The “cornerstones of the federal role today” are two laws first enacted in 1965: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which “provided aid to states and school districts to improve education for children from low-income families and meet other critical educational needs,” and the Higher Education Act, which “opened the door to postsecondary education for those who could not afford it.” (Source: [A Brief History of the Federal Role in Education Policy](#), Center on Education Policy, 1999)
- Since its initial enactment in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has included a commitment for the federal government to pay 40 percent of the average per student cost for every special education student. The current federal share is under 16 percent.
- Competitive grants—which undermine equity by creating winners and losers among students—have risen in recent years, often at the expense of need-driven formula grants for the students most in need. The Department of Education’s proposed FY2015 budget, for example, called for a cut of nearly 5 percent to discretionary formula grants (compared to FY2014) while competitive grants would increase nearly 70 percent.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you support requiring each state, as a condition of receiving federal ESEA funds, to submit a plan outlining how—over a period of years—it will remedy disparities in educational tools, services, opportunities, and resources among districts and schools? yes no
2. Will you support an appropriation bill that prioritizes federal education funds for critical formula grant programs, specifically Title I? yes no
3. Will you support an appropriation bill that prioritizes federal education funds for critical formula grant programs, specifically IDEA? yes no
4. Would you vote for mandatory full funding at the promised 40 percent level for IDEA? yes no
5. When determining how education dollars are allocated in the federal budget, would you support significantly curtailing the use of competitive grants, which often require states to alter their education policies? yes no

B. Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child

BACKGROUND

- The out-of-school factors most likely to limit student success are highly correlated with poverty: low birth weight; prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol; inadequate medical, dental, and vision care; food insecurity; exposure to mercury, lead, and other pollutants and poisons; family breakdown and stress; and neighborhood violence. (Source: [Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success](#), National Education Policy Center, 2009)
- One in four infants, toddlers, and preschoolers lives in poverty during the crucial early years of brain development, and less than half our three- and four-year olds are enrolled in preschool. (Source: [The State of America's Children](#), Children's Defense Fund, 2014)
- Research shows that high-quality prekindergarten programs confer lasting benefits—children who attend them are less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, need special education, or get in trouble with the law later on. (Source: [Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study through Age 40](#), 2005)
- A survey of schools conducted by the Kids' Safe and Healthful Food Project found that to serve students healthy meals in a cost-effective way, 88 percent of school districts needed at least one piece of kitchen equipment, and 55 percent needed infrastructure upgrades such as electrical and plumbing systems, natural gas, ventilation, and increased space. (Source: [Serving Healthy School Meals](#), The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013)

QUESTIONS

6. Would you support legislation that establishes a new federal-state partnership to help fund high-quality prekindergarten for all children from low- and moderate-income families? yes no
7. Do you support providing at least the current level of benefits for children under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)? yes no
8. Do you support ensuring rigorous nutrition standards for meals and snacks? yes no
9. Do you support technical assistance and adequate funding for improved and/or necessary kitchen infrastructure and equipment? yes no
10. Do you support training for all school nutrition personnel to sustain a highly-skilled, professional workforce through provisions of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and other federal nutrition policies? yes no

C. Strengthening the Teaching Profession

BACKGROUND

- The United States can learn from the examples of the top-scoring nations on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) such as Singapore, Finland, and South Korea. "Top-performing countries have a deep history of prestige attached to teaching ... [and] fund schools for the poor and the affluent roughly equally; in the U.S., a tradition of locally-based school finance leads to wide disparities in per pupil funding—a relevant factor when the chief component of school budgets is teacher salaries ... "[S]tudents receive salaries or stipends while they train. In the U.S., by contrast, students often go into debt to pay tuition at education schools while foregoing the salaries they could earn by working." (Source:

[Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching](#), McKinsey and Company, 2010)

- “[In Finland] teachers’ preparation includes both extensive coursework on how to teach—with a strong emphasis on using research based on state-of-the-art practice—and at least a full year of clinical experience in a school associated with the university.” (Source: Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University, [What we can learn from Finland’s successful school reform](#), 2010)
- Every new teacher should receive targeted support and participate in an induction and mentoring program. Novice teachers need more time for planning than experienced teachers and should have opportunities to observe experienced teachers at work. (Source: [Teacher Assessment and Evaluation: The National Education Association’s Framework for Transforming Education](#), 2010)

QUESTIONS

11. Do you support providing incentives—through federal policy—for teacher preparation programs to include comprehensive “residencies” in which accomplished teachers provide guidance to new teachers to ensure that knowledge gained from coursework is also rooted in classroom practice? yes no
12. Do you support requiring classroom-based performance assessments for all teacher candidates—before they are given the responsibility for a classroom—to ensure they possess both the skills and knowledge needed for classroom instruction? yes no
13. Do you support educator certification programs, such as that provided by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which offer valuable professional development and high standards for educators to further their practice? yes no
14. Do you support providing incentives—through federal policy—for teacher preparation programs to emphasize recruiting and retaining candidates from under-represented groups to reflect the growing diversity of our student population? yes no

D. Ensuring Access to the American Dream

BACKGROUND

- About 65,000 undocumented children who have lived in the United States for five years or longer graduate from high school each year. Although they can legally attend most colleges, they are not eligible for most forms of financial aid. Because of barriers to their continued education and their exclusion from the legal workforce, only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high-school graduates go to college. (Source: [Immigration Policy Center](#))
- Allowing undocumented immigrants to work in the United States legally would increase their state and local tax contributions by an estimated \$2 billion a year, and boost the American economy by an estimated \$700 billion over a ten-year period. (Source: [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#), [Congressional Budget Office](#))

QUESTION

15. Do you support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship for aspiring Americans, protection of family unity, and the DREAM Act? yes no

E. Revamping Accountability in K-12 Public Schools

BACKGROUND

- No Child Left Behind increased the number of federally-mandated, high-stakes tests in reading and math from 6 to 14; introduced new high-stakes tests in science; and made participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress mandatory instead of voluntary. (Source: [U.S. Department of Education](#))
- Three out of four Americans say that increased testing has either hurt or made no difference in improving schools. (Source: [2013 PDK/Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Public Education](#))
- “Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments ... it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”— Unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court in [Brown v. Board of Education](#), 1954
- “[A]s the charter sector grows far faster than originally envisioned, the risks are high and growing, while the benefits are less clear ... The problem is pervasive; our search, despite being limited to fewer than half of the states with charter schools, found over \$100 million in public tax funds lost to waste, fraud, and abuse.” (Source: [Charter School Vulnerabilities to Waste, Fraud, and Abuse](#), Center for Popular Democracy and Integrity in Education, 2014)

QUESTIONS

16. Would you support legislation reducing the number of federally-mandated, high-stakes standardized tests? yes no
17. Within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), do you support an accountability system that continues to count student outcomes but also includes student support and school success indicators – things like access to advanced courses, school counselors, fine arts, and health and wellness programs – and to ensure states report and act to close opportunity gaps that are identified? yes no
18. Within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), do you support requiring the use of multiple measures to evaluate student and school performance? yes no
19. Do you support federal mandates that base teachers’ evaluations on students’ scores on standardized tests? yes no
20. Charter schools are publicly funded, yet not all federal requirements apply to them. Do you support holding charter schools, including online charter schools, to the same standards of transparency and accountability as all other public schools? yes no

F. Private School Vouchers

BACKGROUND

- Official evaluations of voucher programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, DC, have found no statistically significant differences in the academic achievement of voucher students compared to public school students. Public school students have been found to outperform private school students when test scores are weighted to reflect socioeconomic level, race, and disability. (Source: [National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education](#), Teachers College, Columbia University)
- Millions of tax dollars have been lost to private school operators who fraudulently misrepresented enrollment data; failed to provide safe, academically appropriate learning environments; and otherwise

gamed the system for personal profit. (Source: [District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program](#), U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013)

QUESTION

21. Do you support federal private school voucher and tuition tax credit programs, including demonstration or pilot projects? ____yes __X__no

I am opposed to federal private school voucher programs, because they pull resources from already stressed public schools. I am in favor of increasing overall federal K-12 spending.

Section II: Opportunity Requires an Economy that Works for America's Middle Class

A. Raising the Minimum Wage

BACKGROUND

- At the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, a parent who works full-time, year-round does not earn enough to be above the federal poverty line. If the minimum wage were raised to \$12 per hour, nearly 38 million American workers would be affected, half of whom currently have family incomes of less than \$40,000. 18.7 million children, or 1 in 4, have at least one parent who will get a raise if the minimum wage is increased to \$12.00 per hour. (Source: [Economic Policy Institute](#), 2015)

QUESTION

22. Would you support legislation to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to at least \$12.00 per hour by 2020, and tie future wage increases to median wage growth on an annual basis? __X__ yes
____ no

B. Making College More Affordable and Accessible

BACKGROUND

- U.S. students' debt burden of \$1.2 trillion is the second largest form of consumer debt—exceeded only by home mortgages. (Source: [Consumer Finance Protection Bureau](#))
- Seventy percent of U.S. students now borrow money to attend college; the average student graduates with a debt of \$30,000. (Source: [College Board](#))
- “[D]ata from the U.S. Department of Education shows that from 1996 through 2012, public colleges and universities gave a declining portion of grants—as measured by both the number of grants and the dollar amounts—to students in the lowest quartile of family income. That trend has continued even though the recession hit those in lower income brackets the hardest.” (Source: [Public Universities Ramp Up Aid for the Wealthy](#), ProPublica, 2013)
- “As recently as in the 1980s, the maximum Pell Grant covered more than half the cost of attending a four-year public college. Even after the recent increases, the \$5,730 maximum Pell Grant in 2014-15 is expected to cover less than one-third of the cost of college—the lowest since the start of the program.” (Source: [Institute for College Access and Success](#), 2014)

QUESTIONS

23. Would you support legislation allowing federal student loans to be refinanced—like mortgages—when interest rates decline? yes no
24. Do you support expanding federal loan forgiveness programs for those who choose public service careers—specifically, educators? yes no
25. Which of the following approaches to Pell Grant awards would you support?
 Increase to keep pace with inflation
 Maintain the current maximum of \$5,730 per student per year
 Decrease

C. Ensuring Democracy in the Workplace: Protecting Workers' Rights to Collectively Bargain

BACKGROUND

- Thirty-four states and Washington, DC, explicitly allow collective bargaining for teachers and education support professionals and higher education faculty. Although 17 states do not have collective bargaining statutes, in most of those states limited bargaining takes place for some or all categories of education employees. (Source: National Education Association, Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy Department)
- “[E]vidence and examples drawn from the public and private sectors show that collective bargaining and workplace innovations based on a mutual interest, joint problem-solving approach can produce positive outcomes for employers, employees, customers, and citizens, especially during fiscal crisis ...” (Source: [Getting It Right: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications from Research on Public-Sector Unionism and Collective Bargaining](#), Employment Policy Research Network, 2011)

QUESTION

26. Do you believe all public education employees should have the right to bargain collectively?
yes no

D. Improving the Affordable Care Act

BACKGROUND

- The NEA-supported Affordable Care Act represents the most sweeping overhaul of our nation’s health-care system since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. Thanks to this landmark legislation, up to 17 million children no longer face coverage denials due to pre-existing conditions, young adults can stay on their parents’ plans until age 26, and health-care costs are growing at the slowest rate in decades. (Source: [whitehouse.gov](#))
- Employer-sponsored health benefits have never been taxed in this country. American workers have made financial sacrifices to maintain their health benefits, often forgoing salary increases to ensure that they and their families have the security provided by health insurance. (Source: [Joint Committee on Taxation](#))
- Taxing health benefits would disproportionately affect women and older workers. The age and gender composition of a covered group is a major determinant of plan expense. Employer groups that are predominantly women, like educators, will be faced with a higher tax simply because of the gender of their workers. (Source: [The Problem with Taxing Cadillac Health Plans](#), Watson Wyatt Worldwide, 2009)

- Middle class taxes would go up between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per tax return if benefits were taxed. (Source: [Joint Committee on Taxation](#))

QUESTION

27. Will you work to repeal the taxation of employer-sponsored health insurance?
 X ___yes ___no

I do not believe that hard working middle-class Americans should be unfairly penalized for health care benefits secured through collective bargaining. I think we can control health care costs and generate additional revenue to pay for the Affordable Care Act through other sources, including taxing health benefits for wealthier individuals.

E. Honoring Work by Ensuring Retirement Security

BACKGROUND

- The Government Pension Offset reduces or eliminates the Social Security survivor benefits of over 615,000 beneficiaries; of these individuals, 44 percent are widows/widowers and about 81 percent are women. The approximately one million beneficiaries currently affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision lose a significant amount of their earned Social Security benefits. (Source: [Congressional Research Service](#))
- In 2014, 59 million people will collect Social Security benefits. For nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of elderly beneficiaries, Social Security is the principal source of their cash income. Among the elderly, for 22 percent of married couples and about 47 percent unmarried people, Social Security provides more than 90 percent of their income. For one-quarter (24 percent) of elderly beneficiaries, Social Security is the sole source of retirement income. Today, every dollar of the average Social Security retirement benefit of about \$15,500 is absolutely critical to the typical beneficiary. (Source: [Social Security Administration](#))
- Without Social Security benefits, more than 44 percent of Americans aged 65 and older would have incomes below the federal poverty line, all else being equal. With Social Security benefits, less than one-tenth of the elderly do. The program lifts more than 15 million elderly Americans out of poverty. (Source: [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#))
- Most retirees enroll in Medicare's Supplementary Medical Insurance (also known as Medicare Part B) and have Part B premiums deducted from their Social Security checks. As healthcare costs continue to outpace general inflation, those premiums will take a bigger bite out of their checks. (Source: [Center for Retirement Research at Boston College](#))
- Recent Republican proposed budgets (i.e. the 2014 Ryan Budget) would convert Medicare to a voucher system and limit the growth rate of Medicare spending for new beneficiaries from year to year. Also, Medicare would no longer make payments to health care providers such as doctors and hospitals; the only way to keep Medicare cost growth within their target would be to limit the annual increase in the amount of the premium-support vouchers. As a result, the vouchers would purchase less coverage with each passing year, pushing more costs on to beneficiaries. Over time, seniors would have to pay more to keep the health plans and the doctors they like, or they would get fewer benefits. (Source: [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#))

QUESTIONS

28. Do you support eliminating or reforming the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision? X ___yes ___no

29. Do you support raising the Social Security payroll tax cap? yes no
30. Do you support converting Medicare to a voucher system? yes no
31. Do you support providing at least the current level of benefits for Medicare recipients?
yes no

Section III: Opportunity for All Requires a Democracy that Works for All

BACKGROUND

- In the past, Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act provided crucial preclearance oversight from the federal government when states wished to change voting laws. This oversight was an invaluable protection in states and counties with a chronic history of voter discrimination and voter suppression. The mere existence of Section 4 often served as a deterrent to states attempting to enact unjust voting laws. While the Voting Rights Act was successful in eliminating voter suppression devices over the past four decades, voter suppression efforts continue to evolve. In 2013 alone, 92 restrictive voting bills were introduced in 33 states and at least 9 of those bills became law in 8 states. (Source: [Brennan Center for Justice](#))
- Unlimited campaign expenditures by corporate and other moneyed interests undermine the role of individual citizens and voters in our democracy. In 2012, a mere 61 donors to Super PACs, giving \$4.7 million on average, matched the \$285.2 million in grassroots contributions from more than 1.4 million small donors to the major-party presidential candidates. Of the record \$6 billion spent in the 2012 elections, more than \$1 billion—triple the amount in 2010—came from outside sources, mainly a relatively small group of wealthy donors that “reportedly sought to raise \$400 million for tax-exempt groups that are not required to disclose their spending.” (Source: [Little to Show for Cash Flood by Big Donors](#), New York Times, 2012)

QUESTIONS

32. Would you support legislation to update Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act to ensure voter protection and access by requiring preclearance of proposed voting laws in those jurisdictions that have a *recent record* of violations of voting rights and disenfranchisement? yes no
33. Would you support a constitutional amendment enabling Congress to regulate and limit federal political campaign contributions and expenditures? yes no

Section IV: Essay Questions

1. **Please describe your top five priorities for public education and how they contribute to ensuring all students attend a great public school.**

A quality education is the key to upward social and economic mobility in America. From kindergarten through college, it provides the critical foundation that has helped so many of us advance our careers and provide opportunities for our children. That’s why I am focused on making sure every student is able to access a world-class education regardless of their financial resources. As a TV news reporter, I focused on school programs and policies that delivered results here in the Washington DC area, and in Congress I will be an advocate for world class public education that provides teachers, students and parents with the resources and support they need.

This includes:

1) Universal Pre-K

As an education reporter in the 1980's, I covered the first Pre-K programs in the DC area. Study after study has shown that the early years of a child's life, when the brain is still forming, are the most critical to future success. Establishing a solid educational foundation at an early age pays lifelong dividends, boosting later academic achievement and sharply reducing the chance of ending up in trouble with the police. A 2007 study found that the federal government could see returns of 8.2 times the amount invested in universal Pre-K by 2050.

In Congress, I'll support President Obama's efforts to expand high quality and affordable Pre-K to more states and more children, so that every student, no matter their background or place of residence, has an equal chance to succeed. It is also critical that educators receive the development and training to be successful Pre-K teachers.

2) Expand Career and Technical Education

Not all of our students are best served by going to college, and that's OK. There are countless jobs that require skilled labor, and not necessarily a bachelor's degree. We need to equip our next generation with the skills to fill those jobs so we can both boost employment and provide ready to work local candidates for the public sector and American business. Students who graduate from a career academy can make up to 11% more each year in their chosen fields than peers who don't have a CTE background. Community colleges also provide two-year associates' degrees and critical technical skills that can be matched with the jobs of the future. Maryland's 8th District is blessed with two quality community colleges that can provide the skills to succeed in a good, middle-class jobs on which to support a family. We need to expand on curriculum offerings and partnerships between our schools and local employers.

3) Increase Federal Funding for School Construction and Infrastructure

If we want to address the growing need for more classrooms and up-to-date facilities, Congress must work with states and local communities to provide more funding to modernize, revamp and repair our public schools. Children learn best in up to date and modern classrooms with the resources they need to grow academically, and we need to do as much as possible to ensure we have enough capacity so our students are not learning in trailers or temporary classrooms. Yet the Republican Maryland Governor has voluntarily withheld \$68 million intended for local public school systems including Montgomery County, and it's clear that future state school construction funding cannot be considered secure. In Congress, I will push to increase funding for school construction and fight to make sure that the 8th District gets every dollar we need to guarantee every student goes to school in a safe and healthy learning environment with modern classrooms.

4) Protect federal funding for Schools

It is impossible for schools to succeed without proper fiscal support, and we must make sure that Congress maintains federal funding. While the majority of education funding comes from the state and local level, the federal government provides allowances, grants, and programs designed to supplement and enhance state education efforts. The current Maryland administration made it clear that state funding for education was no longer a priority when it voluntarily withheld \$68 million intended for local public school systems including Montgomery County, which reduced funding for local schools at a time of growing enrollment. Increasing and protecting federal funding for Maryland schools is a vital step toward ensuring that we regain our number one ranking for our state public schools. We must also ensure sufficient federal funding for students with learning challenges and disabilities. The federal contribution to states has declined since I first reported 35 years ago about the positive benefits of IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in my TV news series, "Building Bridges Not Walls." This has put tremendous pressure on states and counties, like Montgomery County. We need to make sure the federal government reprioritized education funding to make sure all students have access to a quality education.

5) Hiring and Retaining the Best Teachers

Students reach their highest potential when their teachers are given the resources and development opportunities they need to succeed. Teachers must be offered the opportunity to grow and develop

professionally, and those who go above and beyond expectations must be recognized. We need to work with local community colleges and universities to develop degree programs that make sure new teachers are prepared and ready to teach in the subjects they are most qualified for. And we must make sure that qualified teachers are empowered to lead and teach to the best of their abilities.

I also firmly believe that teachers must receive stable and competitive pay that reflects their hard work and dedication. Educators also need career development and mentoring opportunities. Our education system has always been ranked one of the best in the country, and to maintain that high standard we need to hire and retain teachers who encourage creativity and curiosity in the classroom. I would also support incentives, such as college loan forgiveness for individuals who pursue teaching, as a way to attract the best and brightest to this important profession.

2. Traditionally, the federal government's role in public education has been aimed at ensuring equal access for students most in need, including students in high-poverty schools, students with disabilities, and English language learners. As a Member of Congress, what specific steps would you take to close opportunity and resource gaps to ensure educational equity for all students regardless of their background?

We need to move from the vicious cycle where income inequality breeds education inequality and education inequality breeds income inequality. While funding is not a cure-all for problems in education, it is impossible for schools to succeed without proper support. The first step I would take in Congress is to push for more robust federal financial support for K-12 education.

I would also work to make high-quality Pre-K a right for all students in America. The research is clear, investments in early education pays dividends and helps close the achievement gap.

With our growing immigrant population, which enhances America's diverse and rich culture, we face new challenges on the education front. It's important that the federal government do more to ensure that ESL students are given the chance to succeed. Maryland's schools have more ESL students than ever before and we must meet our obligation to provide them with a strong education. This starts with providing more support to local school districts. We also need to increase funding to English Language Acquisition programs within the Department of Education.