**Candidate Questionnaire
2018 Anne Arundel County Board of Education**

Take Action AAC and its parent, Progressive Maryland, are grassroots, community-based organizations that work to progress social, environmental, economic, and racial justice, and to advance the principle that all individuals and groups are entitled to fair and impartial treatment, equality, and equal opportunity. Elected officials have an enormous impact on our efforts to reduce inequality and improve the lives of residents all over the county and the state.  It is our responsibility to not only advocate for residents, but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level.  To that end, Take Action AAC supports candidates who work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups.

To be considered for our endorsement for the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, please complete this questionnaire, including sources of funding and specific examples where appropriate.  Return the completed questionnaire to TakeActionAAC@gmail.com, **no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, June 8, 2018.**  Your responses will be available to the public at ProgressiveMaryland.org and TakeActionAAC.com.

**Candidate Information**

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| **Candidate Information** |
| Name | **Laticia Hicks** |
| Office Seeking | **Board of Education** |
| District | **7** |
| Party | **Non-Partisan** |
| Cell Phone |  |
| Email Address | **Lhickssb7@gmail.com** |
| **Campaign Contact Information** |
| Committee Name | **Citizens for Laticia Hicks** |
| Street Address | **P.O. Box 4206** |
| City | **Crofton**  |
| Zip Code | **21114** |
| Business Phone |  |
| Fax |  |
| Campaign Website | **www.laticiahicks.com** |
| **Treasurer Contact Information** |
| Treasurer Name | Scott Hicks |
| Street Address | P.O. Box 4206 |
| City | Crofton  |
| Zip Code | 21114 |
| Phone |  |

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| --- |
| **Candidate History** |
| Previous Elected Office | Years Served | Major Endorsements |
| NA |  |  |
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| **Progressive Maryland / Take Action AAC**  |
| Have you ever been endorsed by Progressive Maryland, and for what office(s)? |
| No. |
| Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals?  |
| I have attended a Progressive Maryland training session. |

**Questions**:

1. Recent events across the country have highlighted the myriad challenges facing students and society. These include mental health issues (including suicide), opioid and alcohol addiction, bullying, harassment, hate crimes, and more. In addition, school shootings increase stress and remove school as a place of safety and security. How would you rate AACPS’s performance supporting students in these areas, what continuing concerns do you have, and what specific recommendations would you make?

**The racial incidents at Chesapeake High School and the numerous parental testimonies before the board of education and the county council about bullying make clear that AACPS must do a better job responding to these types of challenges affecting our children. Our children deserve to be in safe learning environments free from any worries that would distract them from achieving a meaningful education. I would like to see AACPS live up to its ideals, particularly the mission statement of ensuring an equitable, world-class education, by promoting community collaboration, developing responsive policies, and holding everyone accountable for the results.**

**This means not only being responsive to the aforementioned incidents and challenges but also implementing proactive measures to combat these issues moving forward. Investing in instructor lead trainings, promoting discussion, inviting guest speakers, providing other web-based courses/trainings, and creating class trips that focus on tolerance and acceptance are but a few proactive approaches AACPS could embrace to deal with these issues.**

1. Anne Arundel county covers a large geographical area that includes semi-urban, suburban, and rural areas, each with its own challenges. Access to school sponsored activities, support services, and career preparation opportunities can be limited because of physical distance, lack of public transportation (particularly in south county), and other challenges. Similarly, school board meetings occur at times and a location that make it difficult for many to attend.
How do you recommend that the Board improve student access to services and opportunities? What steps can the board take to make it easier for county residents to be engaged in board deliberations and decision-making?

**To improve access to services and opportunities, I support the implementation of community school strategies especially in our rural and low socio-economic areas. Community schools provide local opportunities for academic, career, and youth development as well as healthcare and other resources and services for the community.**

**Due to varying circumstances, many residents are unable to attend school board meetings. The board should use videoconferencing technology to allow residence and concerned parents to view meetings from alternate locations, possibly in their own homes or at their local school or library. I also recommend that the school board accept questions or concerns submitted via e-mail ahead of the meeting and allow public comment via platforms like Skype. Additionally, the AACPS school board website should be redesigned to make it easier to access information. Now that the board is transitioning to council districts, information can be readily identified for and by specific areas.**

1. Anne Arundel county is home to some of the most beautiful scenery and environmental treasures in the country. How can AACPS better utilize this unique environment as an educational resource, to prepare students for environmentally-focused careers, and to convey the critical need to respect and care for our environment?

**Re-evaluating the curriculum in the school district is a must. We must all come together to identify areas to incorporate ideas for environmental-focused topics that capture student interests. We can also plan projects for children to be engaged in their local community acquiring community services hours. Encouraging volunteerism helps students to become invested in their community. We must also expand the Signature Program, a workforce-related theme instructional program devised to include an additional emphasis and focus on the environment, where appropriate. Finally, let’s create more environmentally friendly outdoor spaces at our schools, where our children can have the opportunity to take class instruction outdoors instead of always within the confines of the school building or on athletic playing surfaces.**

1. Anne Arundel is one of the wealthiest of Maryland’s 19 counties. However, our teacher salaries rank near the bottom. These poor salaries, overcrowded schools, large class sizes, and lack of supports – guidance counselors, mental health providers, teaching specialists, and teacher’s assistants in particular – are some causes of AACPS’ teacher retention problems. How can the board increase retention among teachers and other critical staff?

**The board must do everything possible to ensure that our educators are paid a reasonable wage that is comparable to neighboring counties and also incentivize bonuses for high performance.**

**Outside of salary and compensation concerns, educators choose to leave the profession because they lack support, their professional collaboration and shared decision-making opportunities are limited, and there is not enough accountability and resources.**

**The board can increase teacher retention by promoting an atmosphere that encourages trust between the teachers and administrators. This includes encouraging open lines of communication. Those entrusted with the authority to care for our most valuable resources (our children) must be able to express concerns in a collaborative partnership environment.**

**The board must establish procedures that include educators in the development of school policies and give teachers more autonomy regarding classroom instruction. We must encourage mentoring programs to support new teachers and assist in reducing teacher workloads by providing teachers with the resources they need to be effective educators.**

**The board must increase training opportunities and access to continuing education courses, which encourage growth for our educators. Thanks to technology, CEC are more widely available, and we must reduce or eliminate the financial burden on our educators for career development. These incentives will help increase teacher retention, but the primary concern is raising teacher salaries.**

1. Private industry frequently partners with public entities, allowing both to meet their goals. The downside of this partnership can be the perception that the process is not transparent, critical information is hidden, outcomes are predetermined or made behind closed doors, and profit is prioritized over students. AACPS is not immune to this, nor is it immune to concerns about the influence that campaign donors might have over board decisions. What steps can the board take to counter these concerns? Please include in your response whether candidates for the Board of Education should accept cash or in-kind campaign donations from businesses or organizations and if you plan to do so during this election cycle. If candidates do accept these donations, what policies should the school board have in place to eliminate the above concerns?

**Unfortunately, big money in politics has led to corruption. Candidates must make every effort to avoid engaging in improper practices. I believe donations should come from individual people; I do not plan to accept cash or in-kind campaign donations from businesses or other entities that may give the appearance of quid pro quo. The board’s relationship with business should be strictly for the benefit and service of the schools in the district. Failing to be transparent is a risk that threatens the public interest and our community when teachers, students, and parents lose the trust of the governing body.**

1. The AACPS budget is the clearest way to demonstrate board priorities. What are your priorities, and how would you ensure equity of services across the system? What decisions should be left to school leadership, and which should be determined by the Board and superintendent? Please incorporate examples that either support or run counter to your position.

**My priorities are to review and evaluate the budget to identify disparities in resource allocation. Our focus should be on equitable resource allocation to ensure that all students receive what they need to succeed. The Board must set clear policies and procedures for school leadership to follow. Each school is unique, and school leadership needs the autonomy to make decisions based upon their individual student population. However, those local decisions must not divert resources from needed programs.**

1. Across the country, including in Anne Arundel County, acts of hate, intolerance, and exclusion that run counter to the ideals captured in the Constitution are on the rise. A strong society requires a commitment by all to active social, political, and economic engagement. How can or should AACPS and the Board help create engaged members of society?

**We must keep the focus on the children in our care. All students regardless of ethnicity, nationality, race, heritage, culture, or identity deserve equal protection under the U.S. Constitution. One of the best ways to create an atmosphere ripe for learning is to engage students in our district by including civics courses in the curriculum. These courses should be required beginning in elementary school and continuing through middle and high school. Our country is a melting pot. We are a nation of immigrants, and our classrooms are a representation of this country we love. We must focus on guaranteeing opportunities for advancement for all who desire to learn. We are the standard bearers in our education system to prevent intolerance and promote inclusion.**