1. Describe work you have done with your local, council or state PTA leadership or other state/national organizations that would support the mission, values and purposes of PTA.

The most important work I have done recently has been to help advocate for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. I represented MCCPTA in many meetings with Strong Schools, CASA, Linkages to Learning, Council for Advocacy and Policy Solutions, and two unions, MCEA and SEIU. I helped plan a rally that resulted in over 500 participants which brought diverse community members and legislators together so that families could advocate for a much needed injection of 6 billion dollar in funds and education solutions in order to help Maryland regain our competitive edge in the global economy. I also helped our state level PTA advocate for the Blueprint at important Annapolis hearings. This work supports the mission of PTA, **to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children** by giving families an opportunity to speak with legislators and decision makers about why the Blueprint was important to them.

1. Describe how you will ensure the Free State PTA Board of Directors remain transparent and accountable to the membership.

My fidelity is to the organization, not to any person or persons that make up the board. I represent the families that cannot be in the room when business is done. The money we spend is not ours, and the positions we take should align with the mission and always with the diverse needs of membership in mind. I will be accessible to membership by email and social media. Whenever appropriate, I plan to ask that documents and budgets be made public in an easy-to-find online location. Regular officer reports should be submitted, preferably monthly, and regular meetings held by board members so that membership can give feedback. There should be intentional outreach to students as well. Reports should be available in multiple languages when possible.

1. PTA has prioritized outreach to the following under-represented constituent groups: families in crisis, English language learners, families in poverty, men, Gen Z/millennial/Gen X-ers generations, immigrants, LTBTQ+, rural/urban families, working parents, and other caregivers/advocates. Have you had personal experience with one or more of these groups, and/or experience in engaging with one or more of these groups? If so, share how this has prepared you to serve these priority populations. If not, how will you prepare to serve these priority populations in the state of Maryland?

The schools that I have served are very diverse, and I have had experience with several of these groups, although our PTAs had room to improve as well. One group I have personally had experience with the LTBTQ+ community. I worked with an advocate to highlight the need for gender neutral bathrooms in schools. We helped deliver a message to the local government to support funding in the county budget. I have also been serving as a PTA representative in the Black and Brown Coalition. We work together to advocate for support for Black and brown families, many are part of the groups that are prioritized for outreach. These experiences have helped prepare me to serve these populations by teaching me how to really listen to other perspectives and to also know when to support their advocacy instead of being the loudest person in the room. I once helped a mother whose family was part of the deaf community obtain a sign language interpreter so that she could advocate in Annapolis. Her testimony was powerful and I realized how much more powerful it was in her voice. We need to build relationships with other groups that have more reach into these groups and be willing to “go to them” and not always expect them to come to us.

1. What is the key to empowering future leaders and talent? Can you tell us about a time where you demonstrated this quality?

The key to empowering future leaders is to ask people to join an effort that moves forward the PTA mission. Sometimes just asking a person to join your meeting can be enough to spark that inspiration. Once a person helps children reach their potential, it becomes addictive. It is important to always SHARE the success. Almost all efforts are group ones, especially successful ones. I sometimes look at social media to see who “likes” or responds to advocacy posts. I will then reach out and let them know about a committee that they can join. Since committee meetings are now on zoom, many more can “try out” a committee before becoming committed to action. I try to be as generous as possible with my knowledge and contacts. One of these recruits is now running a committee and has already contacted legislators to work on possible future legislation. We are stronger when we connect and share our resources.

1. What do you believe is the most critical piece for a nonprofit board in planning for organizational success? Please share an example of when you engaged in such planning.

Prioritizing the stated mission of the is critical for organizational success. At the start of every board meeting, we read the mission statement and use that to guide our activities. We then plan for the year, ensuring that our budget also aligns with our priorities. All board members should feel free to question any action, but they must also be willing to accept the outcome if the majority of the board does not agree with their assessment. Loyalty should always be to the organization, not an individual.

1. When you consider committee work that you regard as having been very successful, tell us what you did in planning and execution that made it possible to accomplish the work.

In 2018 we set up an ad-hoc committee to work on Safe Water, centered around new lead testing of school drinking water. This committee started to work quickly with mission focused meetings, gathering data and best practices from other states. We held a meeting to discuss our findings and invited interested local politicians and candidates to learn about this issue. We then sketched out a local and state advocacy plan, keeping local PTAs involved and updated. Based on our advocacy, the county superintendent started a safe school drinking water work group. We worked with the local government to lower the amount of lead allowed to a threshold that was obtainable, but much lower than the original threshold for schools.This work was done in conjunction with the working group and eventually the county school and government agreed to the lower threshold. Early planning and including many voices helped us get a great result.