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1470**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Duluth office

**Candidate name**

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**Election district**

11B

**Party endorsement**

DFL

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**Educator Pay**

**1. ESP living wage: Will you support legislation to ensure that all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour?**

Yes

**2. Due to significantly below-market compensation for teachers, most school districts in Minnesota are having difficulty filling teaching jobs, and state colleges report a continued decline in the number of graduates from teacher preparation programs. Would you support creating a minimum salary for all licensed Minnesota teachers of \$60,000 a year and an \$80,000 minimum salary for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree?**

Yes

**Pensions**

**3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds?**

Yes

**4. Will you support exploring the necessary benefit improvements in order to provide educators with a secure retirement, including reducing early retirement penalties, lowering the normal age of retirement and a career threshold that will help recruit and retain educators?**

No

**5. How will you support efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association in order to expand retirement options?**

I certainly support ensuring a secure retirement for all TRA members and will explore the options with you. However, two factors persuade me that reducing early retirement penalties is not an optimal solution to this. First, there is a shortage of trained teachers

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and early retirement cuts further out of the strongest end of that pool in a way that I don't believe extra retention of younger teachers can compensate for. Second, given the steady rise in the MN median age, I am concerned about the financial draw of longer retirements. In general, I believe that finite funds can be better spent. I am interested to hear your arguments for this and why the existing penalties are considered inequitable. Listening is one end of a partnership with you that I view as very important and I am always open to being convinced.

**Health care**

**6. Do you support educators having access to a mandatory statewide health insurance pool, just like other state workers?**

Yes

**7. Do you support the current language that allows educator locals to unilaterally seek a bid and join the Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) as the insurance provider for local bargaining units?**

Yes

**8. All Minnesotans deserve access to affordable health care and publicly managed plans like MN Care and Medicare are some of the most efficient plans out there. The legislature is currently seeking a federal waiver to expand MN Care to more residents. Do you support expanding all public health care programs to include more working people?**

Yes

**Education funding**

**9a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.**

Yes

**9b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.**

Yes

**9c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.**

Yes

**9d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.**

Yes

**9e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.**

Yes

**9f. Teachers of color: Fund programs to increase the number of teachers of color significantly so teachers providing instruction better reflect the students in our classrooms.**

Yes

**9g. Student support: Continue providing additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.**

Yes

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**9h. TDE/Q Comp: Fully fund the 2011 Teacher Development and Evaluation law, an unfunded state mandate, to ensure teacher quality and lift the cap on the Q Comp program.**

Yes

**9i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.**

Yes

**9j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.**

Yes

**Taxes/revenue**

**10. Would you commit to raising revenue to ensure the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay what they truly owe in taxes so every student, no matter what they look like or where they live, can attend a fully funded public school that prepares them to pursue their dreams?**

Yes

**11. Education Minnesota believes in restoring fairness to the state tax code by raising revenue from the very wealthiest corporations and richest households and reducing the reliance on local levies to fund schools. Considering your own experience and expertise, are there other progressive, equitable ways to raise state revenue that you would recommend the union consider supporting?**

Yes

**12. Fully funded schools require adequate and stable revenues. Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base?**

Yes

**13. A balanced tax code draws revenue from a mix of income, sales, and property taxes. Will you support policies that maintain both adequate funding and a sustainable balance between revenue sources?**

Yes

**Higher education**

**14. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?**

Yes

**15. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?**

Yes

**16. Do you support DEI efforts on our college campuses and universities?**

Yes

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**17. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with the cost of higher education?**

As mentioned above, I support increasing the state's direct investment as a general principle. More specifically, I believe strongly in incentives for high demand career fields including subsidy that covers expenses as well as tuition. The specific high demand career fields are open to debate and should be open to change in a flexible system. This approach provides a higher return on investment to the MN economy and stretches finite funds over a broader set of students. Partnering with MN business and technology organizations can help to further these goals.

**18. The North Star Promise is expected to result in an increase in enrollment on our campuses. Many of these students are projected to be disproportionately first-generation students and students from historically underserved communities. As a legislator, what would you do to ensure these students had the support they needed to be successful?**

The support needed is as broad as the higher education system itself. That makes this a very difficult question to answer briefly. The most obvious cost of higher enrollment demand is capital investment in facilities (including aspects such as student housing that may not be direct) and program development. A robust bonding bill (as failed in the most recent legislative session) is probably the best way to deal with this. A major challenge to this is the need for stable funding in the hiring of instructors to keep class sizes at functional levels. Because the projected enrollment increase is speculative, it is difficult for institutions to make long term commitments that are needed for attracting and hiring high quality staff. The state may need to have a role in providing guarantees. As mentioned above, I prefer to see these types of programs targeted by field to get the most benefit from finite funds. In addition, the students themselves are likely to need support at a more detailed level than the median for the existing population. At its simplest level, this means including the cost of non-tuition expenses when evaluating these programs. I prefer direct funding approaches to that, but investment in job program and internship opportunities may provide supplemental experience and income. Looking deeper into this issue, this will require increased investment in counseling (both professional and personal) and non-classroom hours for instructors. Increased investment in tutoring and teaching assistant programs may also be an effective way to provide supplemental academic support.

**19. There are efforts to expand the North Star Promise to Minnesota's private colleges and universities. This would dramatically increase the amount of public money going to private institutions. Do you support the expansion of the North Star Promise to include private colleges and universities?**

No

**High-quality professional educators**

**20. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms?**

I believe a series of distinct initiatives probably need to be undertaken. Each initiative should include data collection to quantify its effectiveness.

Greater Curriculum Flexibility - In my experience, teachers teach because they want to help individual students learn. Increasing the leeway that teachers have to meet specific student needs is the most direct way to facilitate this. (See Standardized Testing below...)

Compensation - Higher pay leads directly to higher retention and stronger recruitment

Job Stability - Younger teachers are too often forced to move between jobs and districts due, at least in large part, to variable funding. This has a particularly dramatic effect on small and rural schools such as those in my district. Stabilizing funding to enable longer term recruitment can help at the legislative level.

Community Support - This has many facets (see Honesty in Education and School Safety below) - I strongly support the restoration of the property tax adjustment to school funding to previous levels. I believe that this would serve to defuse the opposition between desired education funding and tax calculations particularly in rural and low income communities. In addition to the obvious financial benefit, that would reduce the temperature of some community opposition.

**Standardized testing**

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**21. What individual or system-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate to make based on standardized test scores?**

I worked for a time to grade standardized tests in MN. I have also taught in a fully exam based system while teaching for the US Peace Corps in Zimbabwe. I believe the utility of standardized tests is extremely limited. The best use of standardized tests is to evaluate the success or failure of specific curriculum changes. They also have value in the assessment of pre-instruction aptitude. A teacher can use the results of a beginning of the year test to identify areas that need focus in the upcoming year (and similar areas where less coverage is needed). I view other uses as largely counterproductive. Use of a standardized test as a high stakes evaluation of individual student performance mostly measures test taking skills and performance under pressure. Use of a standardized test on a small scale for evaluation of an individual class or teacher performance has too much statistical noise based on individual student aptitude to be a valid. There may be some value in school wide numbers to evaluate targets for increased funding and attention (e.g targeted class size reductions), but even that is under some question absent identification of a notable difference in curriculum.

**Honesty in Education**

**22. Most educators believe students should have access to a wide range of age-appropriate books that include relatable characters and situations that reflect the diversity of Minnesota families. However, certain politicians and big money groups are trying to remove books from school libraries across America, particularly books with LGBTQ+ characters or those that deal with racism in America. How should Minnesota protect its students' freedom to read?**

I stand strongly against the banning or removal of books in any form and particularly through legislative action. Any decisions regarding access (including age appropriateness) should be left entirely to the trained library staff.

**23. Education Minnesota believes all students should have the freedom to feel safe and welcome in their public school, no matter what they look like, where they're from, how they pray, transgender or not. Do you agree?**

Yes

**24. Students bring many needs into their public schools, but our union believes they all deserve the freedom to grow with the help of support for their mental health and with lessons in how to recognize and control their emotions, which is sometimes called social-emotional learning. Do you support increasing support for students' mental and emotional health in public schools?**

Yes

**Time to Teach**

**25. The planning and differentiating that teachers do daily needs more time. Most after school "prep" is filled with meetings. The current statute falls short of the time needed for preparing lessons. Will you support adjusting this statute to increase prep time?**

Yes

**26. Will you support legislation that protects an educator's prep time so it can't be used for meetings or having to sub for colleagues?**

Yes

**27. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and attend required meetings?**

Yes

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**School safety**

**28. Creating incentives for school administrators to enforce districts' codes of conduct without bias and/or creating accountability measures for those who don't?**

Yes

**29. Increase reporting and transparency in worksite safety when reporting physical injuries and emotional trauma in the workplace?**

Yes

**Union Rights**

**30. The ability of workers to come together in union and bargain collectively has been vital for reducing wage gaps by gender, building the middle class, and limiting wealth inequality in Minnesota. Do you support expanding and strengthening workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively?**

Yes

**31. Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to organize, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access and activities at worksites or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?**

Yes

**32. How will you support unions as a state legislator?**

Unions, as the voice of the people doing the day to day jobs that keep our society going, are vital sources of information on what is needed. As a legislator, I will ensure that the union relevant to any bill is consulted and its expertise taken into account. Additionally, unions provide a counterbalance to the centralization of power and resources in the hands of business owners. The rights to collectively bargain need to be not only protected, but expanded to give more people a voice in the decisions that shape our economy.

**Privatization**

**33. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses?**

Yes

**34. Will you support policy changes that will ensure a stronger accountability system with necessary oversight and reporting to ensure quality management and instructional practices in charter schools?**

Yes

**35. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?**

Yes

**Your role as a legislator**

**Have you visited a public school in your district in the past year? If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as a legislator? If not, when did you last visit a school? Would you like us to help arrange a visit?**

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Yes (Pine City), but only in an informal sense. I have been struck by the increased need for capital investment. I maintain friendships with several teachers and was once a teacher myself so other aspects did not come as a surprise.

**What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations and individuals do you go to for your information?**

I have been a teacher myself in the past and have a reasonable although dated feel for the demands of the field. As mentioned above, I maintain friendships with several teachers and they are my primary source for information about the functions of the schools. From an organizational perspective, I gain news from a variety of sources and become aware of stories through standard media (mostly newspapers and radio). I do follow Education Minnesota and the local schools in my district on social media. The bulk of my information comes from researching questions that arise from the above interactions using primarily government data sites, but also those of relevant institutions and groups based on the question at hand.

**How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are elected/re-elected? If you disagree with us on an issue, how will you communicate that?**

I envision Education Minnesota as a key partner in providing expert opinions on issues related to education and expect to consult with you whenever it is relevant. I hope that Education Minnesota would proactively inform me and other legislators of actions that it believes are needed to support quality education in Minnesota. Where disagreement occurs, I expect to make as clear as possible the reasons for my disagreement and listen to counterarguments to see if I am convinced differently (see questions 4/5 above).

**If elected/re-elected, how will you balance competing priorities that might exist between Education Minnesota and other education groups?**

As with all questions of balance, this depends on the issue at hand. I view the most critical step as consulting all relevant groups with expertise in the question. As a matter of general practice, I believe action should be taken first in areas where there is consensus. Where groups with expertise disagree, debate should occur which often means action should be delayed until at least a degree of consensus is reached. Where an action must be taken and there is no agreement among experts, I have a tendency to lean toward unions as representatives of the workers with knowledge closest to the ground, but that is, of course, not absolute.