

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1468**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - St Cloud office

Candidate name

Abdi Daisane

Election district

14A

Party endorsement

DFL

Email

daisaneformn@gmail.com

Phone

320-223-4902

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?

Yes

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

I will support legislative efforts to amend the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) policies to lower inequitable penalties that disproportionately affect teachers who retire before reaching full retirement age. It is not right that we have one of the highest

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retirement ages in the country. By working to revise the current rules and advocating for a more equitable system, we can provide teachers with greater flexibility and security in their retirement options. This includes supporting adjustments to the actuarial reductions applied to early retirees and ensuring that all teachers, regardless of their career length, receive fair retirement benefits.

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 a state legislator, I would work to increase funding for higher education institutions and expand state financial aid programs to ensure they meet the needs of students from all economic backgrounds. I would advocate to maintain and build-on from the North Star Promise Act which provides free college to students from a certain income level. Additionally, I would support measures to control tuition increases and invest in initiatives that reduce the overall cost of obtaining a degree, such as expanding access to online courses and promoting partnerships between high schools and colleges for dual-enrollment programs.

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?

To ensure the success of first-generation and historically underserved students, I would advocate for increased funding for support services such as academic advising, tutoring, and mentorship programs. I would also support initiatives aimed at improving campus inclusivity, safety, and accessibility, including the expansion of mental health resources and the establishment of culturally responsive support centers. Additionally, I would push for policies that address food and housing insecurity among students and our campuses, ensuring all students have the basic needs met to focus on their education.

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?

To recruit and retain high-quality educators, I believe that we need to start respecting and valuing this profession by recognizing the crucial work they do to educate our children. I would advocate for competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits for teachers. I support increasing state funding for teacher salary schedules and providing additional financial incentives for educators working in high-need areas. I would also champion professional development opportunities and support programs that address teacher burnout, such as mental health services and manageable workload policies. Additionally, I believe in fostering a positive school culture that values and respects teachers' contributions to student success.

We should also invest in recruiting teachers of color background. I have been locally involved in the "Grow your own" initiative project where we tried to support our local institutions to identify and recruit future teachers. This is also important as our schools are becoming increasingly diverse.

Standardized testing

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

Standardized test scores can provide valuable data on student performance and areas in need of improvement. However, decisions based solely on these scores can be limiting and not fully reflective of a student's capabilities or potential. I believe standardized test scores should be used as one of multiple measures to inform decisions about curriculum development, resource allocation, and identifying schools or students that may need additional support. They should not be the sole determinant in high-stakes decisions such as teacher evaluations or student promotions.

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

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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?

We must ensure the fundamental right to read is always protected in Minnesota. Reading is critical to learning and making sure all children can read what they enjoy should not be overlooked. I believe that the passage of a law preventing the banning of books in public schools and libraries in this year's Omnibus Education bill is a good first step. This will help limit our school board meetings from becoming battlegrounds around the role of literature. We also need to ensure that we adequately fund our libraries so they can have the latest and greatest our literary minds have to offer to our children.

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

MoveDuplicate Settings Delete 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

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'

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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?

As a state legislator, I will support unions by advocating for policies that protect collective bargaining rights and promote fair labor practices. This includes opposing any legislation that seeks to weaken unions or undermine their ability to negotiate on behalf of their members. I will work to ensure that public-sector employees, including educators, have the right to organize and advocate for better working conditions, fair wages, and benefits. Additionally, I will maintain open communication with union representatives and actively seek their input on relevant legislative matters.

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?

No

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?

Yes, I have visited several schools, including local elementary schools, in my district within the past year. During my visit, I observed dedicated teachers working hard to provide quality education despite facing various challenges. I also noticed the positive impact of student support services and the importance of community involvement in schools. This experience reinforced my commitment to advocating for increased funding for public schools, supporting educators, and ensuring all students have access to the resources they need to succeed. I would be open to additional visits to stay informed about the ongoing needs and successes in our schools.

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

To stay informed on public education issues, I regularly consult with local educators, school administrators, and education advocates. I also engage with organizations such as Education Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education, and various parent-teacher associations. Attending school board meetings, educational forums, and community discussions has provided me with diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities within our education system. I am personally connected to several of our school board members, our superintendent and many of our local educators.

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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 working closely with Education Minnesota by maintaining an open and collaborative relationship. I will regularly meet with representatives to discuss legislative priorities, seek their input on policy proposals, and address any concerns they may have. If a disagreement arises, I will communicate transparently and respectfully, ensuring that we engage in constructive dialogue to understand each other's perspectives and work towards finding common ground. My goal will always be to prioritize the best interests of students and educators in Minnesota.

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

Balancing competing priorities between Education Minnesota and other education groups requires open communication, active listening, and a commitment to finding solutions that benefit all stakeholders. I will listen to each different group and allow them the opportunity to express their views and collaborate on shared goals. My approach will be to carefully consider the merits of each group's positions and strive to make decisions that enhance the overall quality and equity of our education system. Ultimately, my focus will be on policies that best serve the educational needs of Minnesota's students and support the professional growth and well-being of educators.