

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

Page

Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

Jennifer Nuesse

Election district

17B

Party endorsement

DFL

Email

jnuesse@icloud.com

Phone

952-200-1825

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?

If the early retirement options are allowed on a pro-rated basis (determined by years of service and age at retirement), there could be a more generous offering at each level. Supplemental health and wellness insurance should be a part of the programs offered

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

to improve the well-being of educators in retirement.

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

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.

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

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

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

2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry # 1516

Programs for forgiveness of student loans should be expanded, so that when a graduate finds employment they may actively contribute to our society in their selected field.

Institutions of higher learning must reduce to high cost of education by re-examining their tuition and fees to align with current economic conditions.

Cross-functional teams in industry, education, and local [state] government need to come together to formulate new ideas, select programs that are working well to sustain them, and eliminate outdated programs. This would part of a long-term comprehensive plan to make higher education more affordable.

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?

In order to be successful, additional programs for social services and support could be offered. Many families of underserved communities make great sacrifices to help their family members enroll in higher education. There should not be financial hardship where the student must choose to leave school as a result. Also, post-graduation, good relationships with industries to improve placement opportunities could be further improved. In the City of Arlington, for example, there is a business that recruits students who are enrolled in trade school for welding skills; they are hired contingent on completing their program and this results in a good flow of new employees and allows for better success of the individual.

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?

Attracting and retaining high-quality educators is a factor at all levels E-12 and beyond. Perhaps there could be clubs in the public schools (secondary) that promote "Future Educators of Minnesota" to encourage students to pursue a teaching career, to improve the flow of potential educators. Retention relies on other factors, not only compensation, and our communities must recognize that retaining high-quality teachers and education professionals involves higher costs. In Greater Minnesota, schools districts are finding that bond bills are less likely to pass. Limits to spending within the school districts often impede step increases in compensation for educators, and result in loss of programs for a well-rounded education.

Standardized testing

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

Reliance on standardized test scores has been largely criticized as testing does not appear to be as effective as was hoped. The popularity of standardized tests is waning. I would support legislation for programs to be expanded for marginalized students, where they may exhibit their skills and level of learning in ways aside from standardized testing.

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?

This issue falls under the First Amendment rights guaranteed by our US Constitution. Court cases in other states that have already validated rights of Freedom to Read, where schools at the local level have attempted to remove or restrict access. We must

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

continue to press for access to a wide range of media even when it represents parts of our culture or history that may or may not agree with our values. As a legislator, I would promote and support similar Freedom to Read laws to retain this right. We must encourage abilities of students to think critically. I believe that current attempts for legislation in Minnesota will gain positive ground to keep our options open when it comes to access to books and other media, and I will advocate for this legislation.

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

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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

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?

I am a supporter of labor unions and strongly believe that the benefits of organized labor result in better places to work. I will vote in favor of legislation that improves the quality of life for union members and provides the security of family-sustaining wages and benefits. There could be better compensation for educators in Greater Minnesota. This would help with high turnover where educators seek better wages in more affluent communities.

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?

I have visited a public school for adult-enrichment activities within the past year. The facilities are modern and it occurs to me that some districts do not have up-to-date buildings. I will be attending school board meetings within District 17B and this will give me the opportunity to seek ideas and better understand the challenges currently faced by schools. A current issue in our community involves saving the public pool in our schools district. Due to lack of funding for maintenance, there is a good chance we will lose our school-based pool after about 50 years of operation. This is causing a lot of discontent in our community, and is only one example of how inflation and the local economy is impacting our school services.

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 graduated from a post-secondary university with a degree in education (focus on music education for K-8). I did not pursue a teaching position upon graduating (due to cuts in funding for fine arts when I was about to enter the profession). My husband and I raised four children who attended public schools, and I have followed issues related to public education throughout this time. When I served on the Arlington City Council, the local school administration worked closely with the city on shared programs such as community education. Education Minnesota, school boards and teacher organizations are good resources for seeking information on current issues and roadblocks.

I also have a close family member who is on the autism spectrum (junior-high school student in a public metropolitan (Twin Cities) school. The environment is not conducive to his learning since the special-needs students are combined into one classroom setting, and are not mainstreamed. The stipulations in his Individualized Education Program are not adhered to, and this results in a less-than-adequate learning experience. Organizations that specialize in programs for autism and similar areas could partner

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1516**

with public schools to assure that all of the necessary tools and resources are provided to help students become contributing members in society. There must be more accountability on the part of the district to guarantee that each student receives the best experience possible. This of course requires that professional educators have the training, tools and resources to provide that experience.

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?

Education Minnesota in particular should be involved in decisions that impact educators. I have strong beliefs about the value of public education and would rely on the Education Minnesota organization to assist with ideas for better legislation. As with any subject where there is disagreement, compromise and problem-solving techniques should be employed to come to an agreement.

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

In my career in corporate business, cross-functional teams were formed to identify the highest-priority problems, seek common ground, and formulate new policies or methods to remove barriers. Quality tools and resources may be helpful to enable the groups to collaborate effectively. I have led or participated in many working sessions where good practices were followed to produce successful results; these may also be applied for education groups to come together.

I am a proponent of good quality education and strongly believe that a good balance can be achieved.