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1411**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Windom office

**Candidate name**

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**Election district**

21B

**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?**

Yes

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

I am hoping that when I am elected and that I am a teacher that I will be placed on the Education committee to allow me to give first hand experience to the table. I had been a lead negotiator for my local union for over ten years so I know first hand how

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Districts work to not give any retirement incentives but at the same time get handcuffed to do anything because of state restrictions. It's not fair that teachers lost the Rule of 90 and continue to get no real benefit from retiring until your late 60s which makes no sense for the students, the District or the teacher. If teachers are allowed to retire at a lower age, they are more likely to go back and substitute for Districts which we are also in crisis mode for Subs. The age - the insurance - the ability to retire and pull TRA when you retire versus having to wait until a certain age - all and more I will be fighting to help the teacher.

**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?**

The cost of higher education is truly getting out of hand. And at the same time we have many high school students choosing other career paths that do not require a 4 year school. As a legislator, as I do as any other leadership position I have ever had is look at all the sides of what is happening in higher education and work for a solid solution to the problem. Are there ways to have high school students get their general educational course in high school to lower their costs - are there ways to ensure a successful path for each high school student before graduating high school? I believe a new look at all the different issues we face in higher education should be put on the table to research the best possible answers moving forward.

**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?**

As I stated earlier, it is imperative we look at old and new ideas to figure out what is best for our students coming out of high school across all backgrounds. Education Talent Search that I see in St. James led by a representative from MSU-Mankato is a huge part of helping our students as a first generation college bound student. I would assume other schools have this same program to help their students, but if they do not, this would be a great opportunity for more colleges to run a similar program to help students across the state.

**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?**

Yes

**High-quality professional educators**

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

I have been a teacher for 19 years and over the past 18 in St. James, I have seen many of my old students become teachers - teachers in our District has built relationships with students through the years that those kids felt teaching was a great profession to get into and dozens of them are thriving in the classroom. If more teachers, just simply told someone - "you would be a great teacher some day" - many of those kids would work to do just that. We have a new program in our District that is called "Grow Your Own" - one student that is going into education received a full ride to a college to seek his teaching degree. Also, I have mentored many teaching candidates over the years and one thing I have noticed and seen is that their workload is extremely stressful and tedious. We want to make sure young people are ready for real-life classrooms not just writing about it and many may get that first job and find out it's not for them because they were now in the "trenches". We need to make sure that each teaching candidate gets a highly qualified supervisor that works with them outside of their college professors to help them mold their own style of teaching. I like the fact that I believe there is a pilot program out there this year to pay the teaching candidates in that student teaching experience so they can focus more on their teaching versus having a job outside of their time. Once these young teachers take hold in the classroom - administrators need to do their job to back them up - help them improve - build their confidence instead of feeling they might get cut because of the budget or the fact that they are not tenured as of yet.

**Standardized testing**

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

Honestly, I have never been sold on standardized testing for students or gauging classroom teacher work off of those test scores. A question I posed to my principal this year without an answer is at what point do students give up on standardized tests? As a coach for many years, I have seen athletes just simply give up a sport at some point because they just simply do not play or they are not that good in that sport so they try something different. Is that the same for students in testing? If they constantly score poorly on tests, at what point do these students just simply give up and simply live with the fact they are bad at math or reading?

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So in the end, are the students that are not meeting their standards not meeting them because they have realized I am just not good at math so that's it? Or is it something else? Are they not showing growth in math or reading because of something psychologically holding them back? I think there is more to the numbers that students earn on these tests and a deeper understanding of the success and failure of these scores should be researched to find something new and improved to allow these students of any level to continue to improve their skills.

**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?**

It's simple, students should have access to age appropriate books especially if it tells stories from their backgrounds and will allow other students an opportunity to understand their classmates better if they learn about backgrounds they are not familiar with.

**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

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**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?**

As a long time Education Minnesota - St. James member and years of negotiating contracts for St. James and as a school board member in Fairmont in the early 2000s, Unions need to be protected and make sure teachers participate in their unions. I do not feel it's right that teachers that decide to not participate in the Union, still get a benefit of that same Master Agreement as Union members do. As a Union member, it's more than just paying dues - a strong union in a District, will have a solid teacher base that enjoys coming to work every day and is willing to have everyone's back when things go wrong for someone. As simple as giving up sick days for someone in need or a picnic to have some fun after a long year. I will for sure support ways to strengthen the teacher union and make sure they know that the state legislature has their backs.

**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?**

As I have said, I have been a teacher for the past 19 years (18 in St. James) and from 2000-2005 I served on the Fairmont School Board along with coaching during that time as I was going back to school for my teaching degree for most of those years.

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**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 social studies teacher and union member for all those years so have worked to understand the most I can about negotiating more money and better benefits for our district teaching staff.

**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?**

Yes! Hand in hand I would hope!

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

I have been a leader in many different ways throughout my career and currently am the Mayor of St. James. I have always had the approach of looking realistically at both sides to understand all the issues and impacts of decisions to come up with new ideas or work with the group to find solutions that benefit the most.