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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Brooklyn Park office

Candidate name

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30B

Party endorsement

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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 not familiar with the intricacies of this issue. However, I understand that these penalties can significantly impact teachers who made lower incomes or who came into the education workforce later in their careers. I support the introduction of more flexible

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retirement options, such as phased retirement and part-time retirement plans, to allow teachers to transition into retirement without facing steep penalties. Peripheral to this, I broadly support initiatives to increase the education workforce, which will allow for older teachers to retire while still maintaining a financial base to secure a robust retirement package. I would be interested in learning firsthand about experiences with TRA from educators.

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?

I would support increasing investment in public universities in exchange for tuition caps or reductions. I understand that a big part of rising tuition costs is underinvestment in universities, which pass the buck on to college students in the form of higher tuition. We need to get back to funding our colleges and universities so that they can be within reach for everyone.

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 a first-generation college graduate myself, this issue is important to me. Ensuring that students in higher education are supported starts before they walk through the doors at their university. There needs to be adequate resources -- both in materials and in personnel -- to support AP, IB, and other advanced programs for students planning on higher education. It also means bringing trades educations into high schools. As a high school student, one of the most valuable classes that I took was medical terminology, which provided me a leg up when I got to medical school 5 years later. We need to ensure that students are well-prepared to enter the workforce or start college, whichever they choose.

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?

Recruiting teachers starts with making the field more attractive to those deciding on a career. Right now, teachers suffer from pay that is not commensurate to their level of education. This may have been less of a problem 40 years ago, but with the dramatic surge in tuition costs, it can pose an insurmountable and unrealistic challenge to those who would like to go in to teaching in our public schools. We need to do this in addition to increasing pay for new and existing teachers.

To address the workforce shortage, I support a streamlined pathway for professionals working in other fields to transition into teaching if they so choose, specifically with regards to obtaining the requisite education and subsequently licensure. We need to make it easier to become a teacher, not harder, while also maintaining the important standards and expectations that expect from public school teachers. I would support an affordable pathway to licensure which can then be forgiven after a certain number of years of service to school districts in need.

Standardized testing

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

I believe that standardized testing reflects the relative presence or absence of systemic issues in a school system, from the district to the state and national level. I do not believe it is a reflection on individual schools, teachers, or staff. Standardized testing is a tool for us to look at performance and analyze what is working and not working.

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?

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I oppose any efforts to ban students from accessing books regarding LGBTQ issues, provided that they are age-appropriate on the same level that we would allow students to access other books. Ultimately, a library is a resource for a student. It is not the parent. It is up to the parents to monitor what their child is reading. I strongly believe that efforts to restrict which books students have access to is an affront to the rights of parents who may want their child to have access to those books. Choice matters.

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

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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 oppose right-to-work initiatives, which have the effect of weakening and crippling workers' unions.

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 not personally visited a public school in my district in quite some time. However, I was involved in volunteer work several years ago and helped first graders with reading. And I was very busy. The fact that I was so utilized from the minute I started left a huge impression on me. We have a shortage of personnel and resources, and this needs to be addressed.

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 spoken with our district's superintendent about school funding formulas.

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?

Obviously, legislators cannot be experts on every single issue. Education is a key focus of my campaign, as we have a very large school district that spans throughout my legislative district. If I am elected, I will rely on Education Minnesota to provide me with the necessary information that I need to make informed decisions. Having been educated in Elk River's public school system, eventually going on to be the first in my family to go to college and ultimately graduate from medical school, Minnesota's teachers are near and dear to my heart. They gave me the tools I needed to realize my potential. So I will absolutely be a friend of educators in the legislature. I owe my success to them!

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

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Competing priorities require communication and consensus-building. In a state as diverse as ours, with competing interests and priorities, nobody is going to get exactly what they want. That said, I am concerned with increasing privatization of our infrastructure, education included. I will stand as a bulwark to protect our system from private interests that generally seek to enrich the wealthy and further religious and other non-educational interests in our system.