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1643**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

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Election district

50A

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?

No

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 support efforts to lower any inequalities in penalties within the TRA, and understand pensions and retirement options are also a complex system. How I will do this is listening, and gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities so that I can effectively

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support or help develop proposed solutions.

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.

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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?

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For higher-ed, I am learning and listening to understand the complexities of funding so that I can better versed at what viable solutions could be, and how as a legislator I can support those solutions. I am interested in serving on the Higher Ed Policy and Finance committee if elected, and understand the through line and decisions at a high-ed level and the potential impact down to our youngest learners.

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 North Star Promise needs investment that resembles supports that provide whole student support to ensure access to opportunities for these students. This means creating a whole system of support with language support, cultural liaisons and continuing evaluation and identification of where we need to provide support. We need to listen, and not assume we know all the challenges and potential barriers, so that we can adjust and support as needed.

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?

If we make changes and investments that truly support educators in policy and compensation, I believe we can make Minnesota the best place in the country to teach. We need a strong vision and a strategic plan to support that vision that is funded and invested in by our state if we are going to have an impact on retention of teachers. From my many conversations with teachers over my lifetime, including my sister, teachers teach because they love teaching, and love their students. Our vision for teachers needs to reflect that and then address how we as a system are either working towards that vision for our teachers or ways we are working against it. In addition, a partnership with educators and higher-ed needs to be a priority if we are going to make difference in recruitment.

Standardized testing

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

As a Board member, I kept a post-it on my computer that said -- is it good for kids? I have asked myself this many times in discussions about standardized testing and its purpose. It's safe to say I have mixed opinions about standardized test scores and how that data is or isn't being used. I believe teachers when they have told me that that in order for them to have resources to best support our students, it is helpful for students if testing done is directly related to the individual student -- in the here and now -- so that the outcome of a test has real meaning and purpose to help that student. Meaning, if we are testing kids, we need to use that data to help identify areas of opportunity for kids and as important, areas where kids have grown and shine. Teachers only have students for a finite period of time, so every test needs to be very purposeful. We also know mental health and stress is at an all time high for teachers and students, and so I think we need to always consider any factor that could unnecessarily contribute to this and evaluate as so. Also, I do not support connecting student test score results to teacher evaluations.

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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It's a good start in Minnesota with the passing of legislation to ban banning books in our state, but we need to continue making sure we are supporting our media specialists and teachers with full support at every turn. We also need to make sure that we have multiple voices speaking up when challenges happen so that this fight for the students' freedom to read doesn't fall on the shoulders of our more vulnerable communities that are often targeted in these efforts.

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 am a strong advocate to have representation at the table for the start of the discussions, and believe the more voices we have at the table for decision-making results in better outcomes for all. I believe unions that are representing workforces should be a vital voice in discussion in the building of policy and legislation. As a legislator, I am committed to being accessible to unions and doing what I can to involve unions in building effective legislation. We are better for it.

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?

I can't count how many times I have been in one of our public schools in our district over the past year -- at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Besides engagement in my own children's experience (my four currently attending or have attended pre-K-12 in Edina Schools), I also served on the Edina School Board as a member from 2020-2024. I believe I have a deep understanding of the current public school space for both students, teachers, administrators and parents, and have believe we have a whole public school system that needs to be lifted up with adequate funding and supports so that the pillars of our state's public education system has the ability to begin rebuilding its greatest strength with impactful support -- our outstanding teachers. Taking excellent care of our teachers wholly is how we ensure students' whole needs can be met. In order to do this, our whole public school system needs evaluation on how we are currently operating so that we can have a clear vision to see that we (state) is fully funding what is expected.

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

My school board experience naturally informed me on all issues relating to public education. My role as a School Board member provides me a unique perspective as they are related to those issues. I served as Vice Chair, Chair of the Policy committee, Chair of our Legislative Action Committee, Board representative for AMSD, Board representative for MSBA and was actively engaged as a liaison for school sites including ECFE/Early Learning Center, middle schools and one of our elementary's multi-lingual advisory board. Before my School Board term, I co-organized and ran a successful Operating Levy Campaign in our community gaining understanding of the many challenges related to public education finance. Besides these formal roles, I believe one of the best ways I have been informed is to listen. I seek out voices we don't always hear from to ask questions and gain understanding of

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issues and problems. I believe without fully understanding the issue and problems, we are not able to find solutions that are lasting and have the impact we intend to have.

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?

As a legislator, I will always be accessible with a strong collaborative approach to my work. This includes ED Minnesota, and membership. Communication needs to be open, and ongoing in order to build trust. This is important groundwork so that when issues arise with disagreement, we have built a platform that gives us the best chance for understanding. I am direct, and will ask questions. I don't shy away from hard conversations, but instead, lean in to understand. I also believe it's ok to agree to disagree on things, and important in the effort of future collaboration.

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

I'd like to know more about this question. I am a strong believer in supporting the whole system of public education; we have to continue building a strong foundation. Bridging relationships between education groups is important because good decisions in public education are not made in a vacuum. I will always lead by listening so that as a legislator, I have a better understanding of the outcome and impact of decisions. In my experience, I know that those closest to our students, our teachers, understand student needs for learning in a classroom better than anyone. It is how I approached my role on the School Board, and what you can expect of me as a legislator.