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1409**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Apple Valley office

**Candidate name**

Robert Bierman

**Election district**

56A

**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 will continue to support the work of the Pension Committee in their efforts to improve pension outcomes and especially to address the severe disparities within the teaching profession.

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**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.**

Yes

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**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?**

Last session I supported the Northstar Promise Act. This will be beneficial for many students that would have missed educational opportunities immediately after high school. We need to expand direct grants for students for education. In addition we need to pursue and expand more options to find debt relief by serving a commitment in areas of need across the state. Higher ed tuition

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increases need to be moderated. Higher ed institutions should also be on the hook for helping students achieve their degree in the 4 year period. We need to achieve a debt free educational system for those committed to 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?**

First, obtain a better understanding of what these students might need. Last session we addressed some issues around food supports. I know there are conversations about housing for these students now and I expect that will be a topic of consideration early next session. Tuition is only one barrier they have overcome but we will need to do more and I am prepared to help create the supportive services they will need to make them successful.

**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?**

I believe the guidance of educators is necessary for sound policy reforms to achieve this goal. Burn out is a reality. A teacher network, able to help new teachers is imperative. Funding is a key part of this initiative because it requires time and more energy. While Paid Family Leave will be a welcome addition to the lives of teachers and their families, pay and retirement benefits also are fundamental to retention. The respect and value of teachers in our state budget implicitly reflects the importance we place on family values and healthy communities. I will always vote yes when it helps our children.

**Standardized testing**

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

Testing is only one important component of student evaluation and must be judged in light of the other pertinent aspects of achievement, consideration of ACE scores, experiences of an individual both personal and familial. The location of schools and condition of a schools relative achievement must also be considered. We have a wide variety of academic performance across the country so zip code matters. Interviews, written statements and response essays should also be considered. The test score should be subject to all these other considerations when making system applicant entry decisions.

**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?**

We banned the ability to ban books this term. I voted yes.

**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

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**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

**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?**

Union interests are top of mind for me. I act and vote according to union interests at every opportunity. I visit union halls, call union officials regarding legislation, negotiate language with union members to be clear about the union perspective. I speak in support

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of unions and have been on the picket lines.

**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?**

This year I visited Southview, Westview, Eastview, AV High School and SES. I had different tours and focused on different aspects of education at each one. The dedication of our teaching staff always stands out when I visit a school. There is nothing like a site visit to bring the issues of education into a more clear focus. I become more inspired to promote the needs of our schools and am much better informed.

**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 speak with the Chairs of the Education Committees, along with my colleagues. While I do not sit on an education committee presently I do often listen to hearings. I meet with and correspond with teachers whenever asked, I visit schools, attend some school board meetings when able, read the news on education issues, speak to the Superintendent and Finance Director on occasion, and hear from teachers at my coffee hours. My daughter was teaching for three years so I was also hearing from her regularly. She just provided our first grandchild and is taking a break from the classroom, but I also have two nieces involved in teaching in Minnesota.

**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 believe I am completely aligned with the issues important to Education Minnesota. I also have your contact information should I have questions.

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

Communication. All stakeholders need to compromise sometimes. For me though, we all need to keep our eye on the bottom line. And that is what is best for students and their educational outcomes. There is complexity in every issue at the Capitol. I certainly do not have all the answers. I rely on the stakeholders supplying both questions and answers. I like to listen to reason, logic, factor in fairness, utility, and cost, but ultimately, it is about public interest for public education.