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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Apple Valley office

**Candidate name**

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**Election district**

57B

**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 would begin by reviewing the retirement benefits currently being offered to teachers and compare them to what is available to other front line workers and benefits negotiated by unions representing other public service employees as well as holding

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conversations with Education Minnesota to understand the changes desired in the pension calculations. Then I expect that I would propose a series of steps to move from the current situation to the desired future state recognizing that there will be limits to how much the fund supporting teacher pensions can be increased each year.

**Health care**

**6. Do you support educators having access to a mandatory statewide health insurance pool, just like other state workers?**

No

**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?**

Addressing the high cost of education, including higher education, is extremely challenging. In other parts of the economy we count on productivity improvements to reduce costs. But that implies that educators be able to teach more students at a time or that parts of the process be delegated to automation or lower skilled providers – all of these would likely lead to poorer educational performance. I would look for research from the education community that examines ways to improve productivity and then seek to implement (or at least experiment with) those ideas.

This addresses lowering the cost of providing higher education, but we also need to look at the cost to the student of higher education. Keeping students in state dramatically increases the likelihood that they will remain here as adults and contribute to society many times over the cost of their higher education. So, we should provide our public higher education institutions the funding they need to keep tuition low and provide financial assistance for those in need – as we are doing with the North Star Promise.

**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 and foremost, we need to ensure that the North Star Promise is well publicized so that the students are aware that the program is available. Then we need to work with our public institutions to develop programs to make the first year(s) of college less bewildering. I would confer with staff of our public institutions to understand what they have tried, what has worked, and what has not worked. I don't think it is the place of the legislature to dictate which programs our institutions should adopt, but we should fund the ones that work. I would support directed funding for the public colleges and universities to ensure that the money for critical support programs is used for that purpose.

**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?**

To begin, we need to lower the barriers for qualified people to go into the education field. This would include finding ways to lower the cost of teacher education and/or forgiveness of student debt. In addition, we should continue to look for ways to help people with degrees other than teaching move into the field. While doing this, we need to maintain high standards for our teachers and comprehensive licensure requirements.

All the teachers I know are passionate about their students and the key to retaining teachers is to keep that passion alive. Doing this often requires removing distractions that become dissatisfiers like low pay and duties well above and beyond those of teaching in the classrooms. Part of this needs to include working with parents so that students are ready to learn and continuing the state program to provide breakfast and lunch so that students are not hungry while in class.

**Standardized testing**

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

Standardized tests, I believe, can serve two purposes well. First, they are consistent measures of progress. With them we can tell whether students are advancing a grade level in knowledge and thinking progress each year. When students advance an amount outside of the norms they can provide valuable information in determining whether a student should get specialized services. The extent to which a teacher's students advance, compared to their peers, can also provide input for their career development.

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At a school or district level, the average rates of annual advancement compared to peers and to prior years can also identify trends to assess where adjustments are needed.

Absolute scores on standardized tests should not be used to assess any student, teacher, school, or district. There are too many confounding factors that influence the scores.

**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?**

First and foremost, no age appropriate materials should be banned from our curricula or our school libraries. As noted in the question, students should have the opportunity to explore and school should be a safe environment for that exploration.

**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?**

I will support legislation that reduces barriers to forming unions and that provides penalties for employers who seek to prevent union formation. I will also support the right of all union members to strike and to remove barriers to selective strikes (as we saw the auto workers' unions do so effectively).

**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 visited a school in many years since my children were students. As I have now dramatically scaled back my employment I have more time to visit schools and would welcome assistance from the union to arrange visits – I would look forward to visiting elementary, middle, and high schools between now and election day.

**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 rely on teachers, parents, and school board members that I know to get information on public education. Being engaged with a parents group supporting our teachers in Lakeville during their lengthy negotiations taught me a lot about teacher pay and the

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passion that our community has for our teachers. Through that I also did research from data on the Department of Education website comparing budgets and spending of the Lakeville and surrounding school districts.

**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?**

My door will always be open to meeting with representatives of Education Minnesota. When education legislation is brought to the table I will seek out the thoughts of the union as part of collecting input from all stakeholders.

It is my goal to be transparent on my position on the issues. I firmly believe that when we start with a common understanding of the problem to be solved that we can all bring solutions to the table and find a compromise that we can all accept as the step forward that we can take today.

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

As noted above, the key is agreeing on the problem we are trying to solve. If we can agree on that, we can find an acceptable compromise on next steps. I've spend a career in product development where we always need to find a compromise between the ideals that sales wants, the physics of what the technical team can create, and the costs to manufacture the product. When we put everything on the table we have always been able to align on a good path forward – it may not delight everyone, but we all agree it is moving us toward our destination.

The bigger challenge will probably be prioritizing improvements in our education system versus the many other priorities for the state. Deciding on this will be hard work with legislative leaders and the many, many stakeholders in the state.