

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

**Page**

Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

**Candidate name**

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**Election district**

63A

**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 believe the legislature should explore new systems for providing educators with a secure retirement. I would support such efforts. In an improved retirement system for educators, implementing retirement options that include earlier retirement might also help

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

recruit and retain educators. Retirement options that allow educators and their families the most flexibility and highest guarantees should be available. I will support the efforts of the Teachers Retirement Association and their members to lower inequitable penalties.

**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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

**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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

**17. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with the cost of higher education?**

I believe that we made great strides last session by implementing the North Star Promise Act which guarantees free college to Minnesota state and university systems for families making \$80,000 or less. We need to make sure students and their families are aware of eligibility and how to apply to this program. I am committed to hosting town halls introducing and explaining the program to prospective students and families with program administration/admissions. I will also provide regular updates through newsletters and postings with timelines and reminders for any applicants to have information on where, when, and how to apply. I have also reached out to local schools in my area to ensure they are aware of the program. I would also be in support of expanding this program to include a broader income range. I also believe the state should be investing more in our state-run college and university systems, which will help keep costs for students lower. Additionally, I am in support of funding programs that offer reduced tuition to individuals going into high-need professions such as teaching. Finally, as someone who has student debt myself, I will continue to advocate at the Federal level for student debt relief.

**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-generation students and students from historically underserved communities need robust supports to be successful in higher education. I would support investment in programs that specifically create community and develop leadership for these students such as TRIO and Upward Bound. I would additionally fight to ensure we are continuing to prioritize DEI efforts on college campuses because these programs help historically underserved students.

**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 am proud to be partnering with EdMN and educators across the state on legislation to offer competitive salaries to teachers including a starting wage of \$60k and a wage of \$80k for educators with a masters who have spent significant time in the classroom. This will be one of my top legislative priorities for next session, and I will be pushing my caucus to prioritize this policy to ensure we can recruit and retain high-quality educators and create safe and stable schools. Additionally, we know that districts are overburdened by high healthcare costs for educators, which leads to less funding for wages. I am the chair of the Minnesota Health Plan caucus and will continue to fight for single-payer healthcare to solve this issue. Finally, I support reducing student-teacher ratios to ensure we can keep caseloads manageable for teachers. On the recruitment front, I greatly support the investments we made last year in the Teachers of Color act and I believe we should continue those efforts.

**Standardized testing**

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

Schools rely on funding based on students' performance on standardized tests, but test results don't necessarily measure how much students have learned or have been prepared for further education. If anything, standardized test results might show gaps in access to test preparation, in which case individuals or schools showing low standardized test scores should receive more support. We should supplement standardized testing with other measures, such as portfolios, that show learning over time and showcase students' real life experiences.

New to country students should not be required to take standardized tests until they have reached comfortability with language

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

and curriculum. Students who opted out of standardized tests should not be counted in the standardized test score of the school or district.

**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?**

I would oppose any legislation that bans books teaching ideas related to critical race theory or denies the existence of the LGBTQ+ community. I support providing teachers the resources they need to facilitate honest conversations with students about the history of the United States. In my first term I authored legislation requiring ethnic studies courses be offered to all Minnesota school students.

**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?**

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

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?**

Unions are an incredibly important part of our governing coalition and have pushed progress forward on many key issues across our state. I have worked with unions on the campaign trail and in office and have received endorsements from local unions and unions across our state. I show up to picket lines, meet with unions about legislation, supported legislation to ensure workers can organize such as the PELRA legislation at the U of M, and used my platform to support union priorities.

**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 make it a priority to visit schools across my district. I have visited/toured and met with staff and students from Seward Montessori, South High, Folwell Elementary, Sanford Middle School, Roosevelt High, and Howe Elementary. During these meetings we have talked about student concerns around bathroom access, the ongoing conflict in Palestine, the superintendent search in MPS, budget cuts, and the needs of immigrant and refugee students. My observations at these meetings is that we have tremendous potential in our schools- our students are brilliant, our educators are skilled and dedicated, and our community deeply understands the crucial role strong public schools play in building healthy communities. And, I recognize that it is a hard and uncertain time in MPS which will take tremendous leadership, political will, and collaboration to ensure our students and schools get the support and investments they need. These meetings help inform the decisions I make as a member of the legislature and specifically a member of the Education Finance committee.

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1549**

**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 often with EdMN and MFT members and leadership as well as school staff in various roles. I also connect with parents and community members who are invested in our public schools. I worked closely with the Ethnic Studies coalition to ensure our students have access to a diverse and reflective curriculum.

**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?**

If re-elected I hope to be in relationship with Education Minnesota through meeting, learning together, and being in dialogue. If we disagree, I will be transparent and accountable to Education Minnesota.

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

If re-elected, I know there will be competing priorities amongst education groups. I believe that most of the time I will be most aligned with Education Minnesota, because my number one priority is strengthening and protecting public schools. And, I know there will be issues of conflict or competing priorities. In those instances, I vow to continue listening and engaging in dialogue with various groups, and to be honest and transparent about my perspective.