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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

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Election district

63B

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?

As a baseline, most our shared priorities — investing in public education including increasing the resources in our classrooms, increasing the compensation, health care and retirement security for teachers and hourly school workers, increasing the supports

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for students including more counselors and mental health workers, investing in higher education pipelines to increase the teachers of color and indigenous teachers in our classrooms, and eliminating the special education cross-subsidy, to name a few — require a budget that raises additional progressive revenue and allocates it to our education priorities.

I am committed to our shared goal of increasing progressive revenue and investments to strengthen public education. That requires allocating our budget in a way that centers the needs of students and communities, starting by prioritizing efforts that reduce the disparities and opportunity gaps for BIPOC kids and communities. For our kids to succeed, they need talented, experienced educators who are supported and invested in at every stage of their career and development — from recruitment to retirement. I will work to support teachers at all stages of their career. That starts by attracting teachers to a profession where they are fairly compensated, respected, and provided the training, support and resources to succeed. We need to retain teachers by ensuring that they have power on the job, manageable class sizes, wrap around support for students, and retirement security when they are finished with their career.

As someone without expertise, or any personal experience with having a pension, as we discuss reform options for TRA, I will listen closely and learn from educators at all stages of their career, including prospective teachers. I will work to ensure that reform efforts support our shared values of strengthening public education, ensuring our kids get a world-class education, ensuring family-supporting compensation and retirement security for our educators, and supporting our educators at every stage of their career in public education.

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

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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

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

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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?

We need to invest in the success of every Minnesotan from cradle to career. And to get there, we need to make sure every Minnesotan student can go to public college and technical programs without being saddled with debt. I would like to see the North Star Promise Act expanded to make four years of public college and university tuition free for families making \$150,000 or less a year.

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?

In addition to ensuring these students do not have tuition debt, I also think we need to invest in both academic and non-academic supports that help first-time college students to succeed on campus. That includes mentorship and career pipeline programs that help students build the relationship and skills to succeed once they graduate.

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 will work on increasing both the compensation, support and time for professional development for teachers and educators in our classroom. I also believe we need to ensure that educators get the professional respect and public support that help attract and retain people into the profession.

Standardized testing

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

The over reliance on standardized testing over the last thirty plus years has been terrible for public education in the United States. Inherent cultural biases in testing perpetuate systemic racism and devalue schools and students already historically marginalized by discrimination. I continue to listen and learn more about standardized tests from teachers, educators, experts and communities and the impact they have and would want to learn more to ensure those tests are not reinforcing educational discrimination before I am willing to say that there is any decision that should be based on them.

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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?

Academic freedom and inclusive curriculum are cornerstones of public education and the role that it plays in our democracy. I'm proud that we passed a bill to ban book bans and I will oppose any legislation or local action to remove books from school libraries. Additionally, we should stand up and support our school librarians, teachers and educators everywhere, and especially the ones in areas where they are coming under pressure and political attack for courageously standing up to ensure that our students get age-appropriate, inclusive, and historically-accurate books.

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

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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 strongly support workers' right to organize, whether it's in the public or private sector. My career in the legislature has been focused on creating a democracy and an economy that works for all Minnesotans and that starts with supporting both policy and organizing that protects and strengthens the power of workers and their collective power in the workplace, our economy and our democracy. Big corporations and billionaires have concentrated immense wealth and power and attacked unions, while workers have been under attack. It is not a coincidence that these attacks have coincided with attacks on public schools, voting rights and ways that communities come together to invest in the common good. In addition to fighting back against attacks on unions, I have been working on ways to strengthen the power of workers on the job including reforms that make it easier to organize in the public and private sector, that increase the scope and substance of collective bargaining agreements, and that protect workers when they exercise their power to strike. Striking worker unemployment insurance, expansions of PELRA, and increasing the enforcement of our labor laws are all policies that I'm proud to support.

I deeply believe in the power of unions to create worker power and prosperity in the workplace, in our economy and in our democracy. MFT members are the teachers and educators that are educating, advocating and supporting our public school students, families and communities and I am ready and enthusiastic to work with you to ensure every kid in Minnesota gets a great education. And I will support, organize and work alongside MFT and other unions to build power and public support for a bold and robust agenda that invests in our kids, our communities, our schools and our environment.

Lastly, building a close and trusting relationship with MFT and other union members is very important to me. If there is an opportunity to stand, march, picket or support workers and lend my support to organizing and contract campaigns, you can count on me to stand together with working people.

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

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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?

Yes. I've spent time in Justice Page Middle School and Washburn High School. In both schools, I observed a strong and talented community of educators who are deeply committed to educating, supporting, and caring for the students in their school. I heard about the successes of reading interventions, universal school lunch, and specialized curriculum that teachers were developing with their student body in mind. I also heard about issues of absenteeism, of workforce shortages that left the administration and teachers to scramble for subs, of the increases of new to country students, and the urgent need for increased mental health support for students and educators alike. I'm also eager to visit the schools in my district and eager and ready to work with you and your members to lead on public education at the Capitol.

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 listen and learn from the teachers, educators, support staff and parents in my district and across the state. When I have questions and seek guidance, I've asked community members, union leadership, teachers, school workers, principals, and public school parents for their perspective.

Public education is incredibly important to me and I've been personally connected to public school teachers and educators, students and parents my whole life. On issues relating to public education, I go to MFT, Education Minnesota and SEIU Local 284 for information, guidance and a trusted perspective. Throughout my career and advocacy work, I've often consulted and been advised by leaders and organizers in the field I know and trust including Mary Cathryn Ricker, Rep. Mary Kunesh, Chris Stinson, Shaun Laden I think the most important part of the job of an elected official is to develop genuine and trusting relationships with the workers, families and residents who live in my district. Understanding the lives, struggles and dreams of people in the district, and the state, and how we can, together, partner to make positive and lasting change is the center of my campaign and will be the center of my governing approach.

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 think the most important part of the job of an elected official is to develop genuine and trusting relationships with the workers, families and their advocates in Minnesota, and the residents who live in my district. Understanding the lives, struggles and dreams of people in the district, and the state, and how we can, together, partner to make positive and lasting change is the center of my campaign and will be the center of my governing approach.

In my four years in the legislature I've been working on building strong and trusting relationships with MFT and Education Minnesota members and leaders who work everyday to educate and nurture our kids. In addition to the outreach to folks who are already politically active in my district, with your support, I'd love to continue building relationships with MFT members who live in the district. Hearing their stories, learning more about the work they do, and their values and vision for our district and our state will help me understand how we can better serve both members and the public.

Whether it is finally ensuring hourly school workers have access to unemployment insurance, or fighting to increase funding for schools, I am proud of the work we've done together in the legislature in the last four years, and I look forward to continuing working in partnership to make our shared vision of strong, inclusive public education a reality. And partnership means that when we disagree or don't share the same perspective – I will communicate, listen and engage with you and your members on where we can find common ground and shared priorities. A trusting relationship requires good two-way communication even when we don't agree.

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

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We need to start by asserting an aligned set of bold and progressive policy priorities and reject a scarcity mentality that often leads us to negotiate against ourselves or think too small. While I will always do my homework, I am very grounded in the people who do the work and the communities impacted by the policy decisions — I start from the experiences and perspectives of the educators, school workers, students, and families in my community.

I believe deeply that we are stronger together and we can work to set our priorities together — electeds, Education Minnesota, other unions and progressive advocacy organizations. And it must all start with the baseline that we will raise the progressive revenue we need to invest in fully funding our schools, advancing racial equity in our schools and communities, protecting the power of educators and support staff to do their jobs, and center the needs of students and communities. My background is in working with labor organizations, progressive organizations and progressive candidates to build coalitions and aligned agendas and I think that orientation serve me well in this regard.