



Candidate endorsement questionnaire – SPFE office

2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire

"*" indicates required fields

Candidate name *

Dave Pinto

Election district *

64B

Party endorsement *

DFL GOP

Other

Other

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Education Minnesota's top priorities are

supporting educators with professional pay, pensions and health care.

Students learn best when they can develop a trusting relationship with their educators, but what happens when there aren't enough educators?

From the statewide shortage of teachers, licensed school staff, substitutes and education support professionals to burnout among state college faculty, it's clear Minnesota must improve the financial well-being of its educators to address the labor crunch in public education. Nine out of 10 schools in Minnesota are significantly affected by the educator shortage, which harms students of color, students with disabilities and students from rural areas the most.

Understaffing accelerates burnout, low pay forces educators to work multiple jobs, and spiraling health insurance costs encourage educators to work sick. Add in broken pension plans, and it's no wonder educators are reluctantly leaving their students for higher wages outside public education.

Educators are worth more—and they know it. That's why Education Minnesota, a union of more than 84,000 educators in E-12 and higher education, supports a package of bills designed to recruit the next generation of passionate and knowledgeable educators, and retain the best group of education professionals in America.

To offer our students the highest-quality education, employers must pay their educators fairly from day one through retirement, show them the respect they deserve and reduce burnout. Together, these proposals are a responsible reaction to the staffing crisis. Our students, and educators, have waited long enough.

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 No

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 No

Pensions

3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds? *

Yes No

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 No

5. How will you support efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association in order to expand retirement options?

*

I'll continue to listen to constituents and colleagues with expertise in this area and encourage a robust target for state pension funding. I'm proud to have been recognized by educators for my work in support of the 2023 pension bills.

Health care

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

*

Yes 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 No

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 No

Education funding

9. Please indicate your support or opposition to the following components of our full-funding agenda.

a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.

*

Yes No

b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.

*

Yes No

c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.

*

Yes No

d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.

*

Yes No

e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state. *

Yes No

f. 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 No

g. 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 No

h. 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 No

i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.

*

Yes No

j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom. *

Yes No

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 No

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 No

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 No

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 No

Higher education

14. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?

*

— —

Yes No

15. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?

*

Yes No

16. Do you support DEI efforts on our college campuses and universities? *

Yes No

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

I'm proud of the significant investments that our DFL trifecta made both in K-12 and in higher education this past term. And yet, both K-12 and higher education still receive much less state support - adjusted for inflation and student growth - than in past decades. The biggest thing that I can do as a legislator is to continue to prioritize both these investments and the revenues needed to fund them.

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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?

*

I agree that it's critical that these students have the support that they need to succeed - we all benefit when that happens. The best way that I can help as a legislator is to listen to these students, and those who work with them, and then to act on what I learn.

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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 No

High-quality professional educators

20. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms? *

We need to step up targeted programs – especially for teachers of color and teachers in particularly-needed areas – including mentoring, loan forgiveness, and stipends for student teaching. Our budget has included a number of those approaches. But fundamentally, state funding - to support fair compensation - continues to be critical.

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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 should be used, as one tool among many, to help assess and improve student learning. I'm skeptical of the broader utility of such tests, especially to evaluate individual educators or schools.

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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?

*

I'm proud of the law that we passed this spring that prohibits book bans in schools and public libraries - and that took effect on August 1! That was a major step forward. Beyond the new law, we need to continue to emphasize the importance of freedom of inquiry - and to call out this kind of censorship where it shows up.

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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 No

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 No

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?

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Yes No

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 No

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 No

School safety

Parents and educators are growing more concerned about the safety and well-being of students and educators in Minnesota's schools. As the educators of Education Minnesota develop proposals to ensure a peaceful and productive learning environment in schools, would you support:

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 No

29. Increase reporting and transparency in worksite safety when reporting physical injuries and emotional trauma in the workplace?

*

Yes No

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 No

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 No

32. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

In my work outside of the Legislature, I'm a public-employee union member myself (AFSCME Council 5). I have a strong pro-labor record, including the pro-worker progress that we made this past term. I'll continue to stand with my sisters and brothers in labor.

Privatization

33. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses? *

Yes No

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 No

35. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made? *

Yes No

Your role as a legislator

Run for 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 go to Highland Park Senior High School fairly regularly and also occasionally stop by several of the elementary schools in my district. I love visiting public schools; the visits always give me such energy and insight.

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

*

St. Paul Federation of Educators, members of the St. Paul Board of Education, Education Minnesota staff at the Capitol, and many others

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 hope to continue to work together closely to ensure a strong education for all Minnesota learners.

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

*

I'll continue to listen and communicate. And I'll continue to call out one common theme underlying education issues – which is that education is deeply underfunded, whether one is talking about K-12, higher ed, or development and learning in the earliest years. We continue to need greater public investment across the board.

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