

**Education Minnesota  
2022 Minnesota Attorney General questionnaire**

**Funding of Public Education:**

What is your philosophy on the funding of public education? Specifically, who is responsible for public education funding, what is an appropriate level of funding for public education, and how do you see yourself contributing to this issue?

Access to equitable education opportunities is key to ensuring all Minnesotans are prepared for success. From preschool through college, every student deserves the right to high-quality affordable education. I believe in robust public investment in our students through a progressive tax system that ensures that corporations and the wealthiest among us pay their fair share.

**A just and inclusive Minnesota:**

What strategies do you believe are the most effective in solving the opportunity gap in education? What would you do as a state leader to promote or expand those strategies?

Universal access to quality pre-k programs is a critical way to close the opportunity gap by helping low-income and at-risk students read and write at the same rates as their peers. We must also invest in full service community schools with wrap-around services to help all students get the support they need to succeed inside and outside the classroom.

We need to support our teachers with access to high quality professional development, excellent pay and benefits, and appropriate class sizes. We must also increase college affordability and access by moving to debt-free college.

What actions could you take as attorney general to decrease racial and economic inequality?

It's my job as Attorney General and the People's Lawyer to help Minnesotans afford their lives and live with dignity, safety, and respect — especially when they have nowhere else to turn for help.

We need to continue to level the playing field to ensure a fair economy for everybody. We must defend every person's opportunity to create a better life for themselves -- whether it's getting an education, starting a business, or buying a home. That means holding those in power accountable -- taking on big drug companies, exploitative student loan services, and any company that tries to increase profit at the expense of working Minnesotans. That is what I have done as Attorney General.

We are fighting fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations, protecting Minnesotans' wages from theft, lower pharmaceutical drug prices, holding opioid companies accountable for the deadly opioid epidemic, protecting tenants from exploitation, and more.

Fighting for a more fair society means defending the rights of all Minnesotans. As a former civil rights attorney for 16 years, I know the value of a good lawyer to protect the rights of all to be free from discrimination and harm.

Do you see a role for the Attorney General in disrupting patterns of racially disparate discipline in schools?

Disrupting racially disparate discipline and incorporating trauma-informed practices is paramount to ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed. This is something that I've been working on for a long time, including during my time in Congress, working to address the [school to prison pipeline](#).

While I have no direct authority as attorney general, we're seeking creative ways to address the issue of disparate discipline. It's been emphasized in our mediation efforts in an attempt to settle Cruz-Guzman v State. We're also exploring opportunities to address the school to prison pipeline as multi-state work with Attorneys General across the country.

I'm committed to exploring ways we can convene relevant stakeholders—including school districts, the Minnesota Department of Education and Department of Human Rights—to address this issue.

A number of states or local school boards have attempted to limit the teaching of certain subjects or topics in schools that they have misleadingly labeled CRT. What is your opinion about these efforts and is there a role for the Attorney General's Office in challenging them?

We absolutely must teach the histories of race and racism in our schools so we can equip our children with the knowledge they need to build a vision for the future together. While not within my duties - I support efforts by one of our clients, the Department of Education, to expand social studies and the examination of different races and ethnicities in the core curriculum. Efforts to prohibit teaching about the impact of racism fail to acknowledge the importance of racism to the most critical parts of our history, slavery, the Civil War, the failure of reconstruction, all the way to the impact of the MDHR report on the Minneapolis Police Department's practices and patterns. Any efforts to ban accurate teaching of our nation's history will not find protection as long as I am the AG. Unfortunately, one need not look far to see how other states' AGs have sought to politicize CRT with letters to the Secretary of Education joined by 20 Red AGs, and efforts in places like MO and TX to use their offices to attack local school

districts teaching ethnic studies or the history of race in America. That will not happen as long as I'm the AG.

What actions can you take, as the Attorney General, to ensure that access to the ballot in Minnesota remains open and voter participation remains high?

I am committed to protecting Minnesotans' right to vote and the integrity of our elections. Minnesota has consistently been ranked #1 in turnout in the country, we must continue to work hard to not only to preserve that but to also expand it to those who have been marginalized. Early/Absentee Voting & Same Day Voter Registration has helped in closing that gap. When it was under attack during the 2020 election, I worked with the Secretary of State to ensure every eligible voter in Minnesota had equal and fair access to the ballot box, and I put out clear guidance for all Minnesotan voters about our rights to vote safely and without intimidation. I also sued the Trump administration Post Office over changes that were slowing the delivery of ballots so that eligible people in every state could vote.

What will you do to protect immigrants?

As Attorney General, working to combat a rise in hate crimes that target our most vulnerable. I have assembled a coalition of federal, state, and county law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to address bias-motivated crimes and to better identify risk factors to head off acts of domestic terrorism before they happen.

One of the first actions I did once elected was a Hate Crime Summit and a series of community listening sessions throughout the state devoted to learning about community experience with hate crimes and bias incidents. I also testified at the Legislature for a bill to increase reporting of hate crimes, because more reporting and accurate data are needed for us to fight them effectively.

I have also worked closely with our immigrant community on our consumer protection work like rising costs of prescription drugs, healthcare, and higher education; and fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations.

I believe that this work is critical now as we see the GOP double down on their anti-immigrant agenda and sow fear as they push for policies that violate the civil rights of those they disagree with.

**Union rights:**

How have you supported unions and collective bargaining as Minnesota attorney general and how will you do so if re-elected?

Defending the right to collective bargaining is paramount to my work as Attorney General protecting Minnesotans. In *Uradnik vs. Inter Faculty Organization*, a 19-year professor at St. Cloud State University argued that being represented by the Inter Faculty Organization — which was elected by a majority vote and certified under the Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA) as the exclusive representative for traditional teaching faculty at the seven MnSCU campuses, including St. Cloud State — violated her First Amendment rights of free speech and association.

Our office filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court urging that they not accept the case for review, and instead uphold the Knight precedent, which says that exclusive representation does not infringe upon speech or associational rights of non-union members.

I will always stand up for the principle that employers and unions have the right to set up exclusive-representation agreements, which guarantees strong unions and good wages and benefits for employees.

Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access to workplaces or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?

Yes. I will always protect workers who exercise their legal right to join together and fight for higher wages and better working conditions.

### **Working families:**

What actions have you taken to regulate the health insurance industry and/or help reduce the cost of health insurance to school districts? What further actions would you plan to take if re-elected?

I believe that access to affordable healthcare is a fundamental human right. As Attorney General, I am proud to have been part of a broad coalition of AGs that successfully defended the Affordable Care Act all the way to SCOTUS, which upheld it against years of right-wing challenges. This means that the ACA will continue to provide coverage to 2.3 million Minnesotans with pre-existing conditions, will continue to guarantee preventive healthcare to 2.7 million Minnesotans — including contraceptive healthcare for 1 million Minnesotans — and will continue to provide coverage for 300,000 lower-income Minnesotans who might have lost it if the ACA had been overturned.

I have actively supported single-payer health insurance for many years: single-payer would single-handedly make insurance more affordable and cover many more.

I'm very focused on fighting consolidation and antitrust behavior in health insurance, which drives up costs. Our office is suing UnitedHealthcare to prevent their attempt to acquire a rival claims-editing firm that would give United control over 75% of the so-called "first pass" claims-editing business in America.

My job is to help Minnesotans afford their lives — and it's already tough enough to do that these days, especially with the rising cost of health care. This proposed merger would increase costs and decrease the quality of healthcare for Minnesotans and all Americans. It would put too much market power and data in the hands of one corporation at so many levels of the health care industry, and that would raise costs and decrease choice for consumers in an already deeply flawed system.

What actions could you take as attorney general to ensure Minnesotans earn living wages, including school employees?

I believe that everyone should take home every dollar you've earned on the job: this means your employer should pay you every dollar you've earned, including overtime. That is why I created the first-ever Wage Theft Unit in the Attorney General's Office that investigates and litigates complaints of wage theft and other workplace fraud and abuse perpetrated against Minnesotans of all backgrounds, especially the most vulnerable. So far we've put more than \$270,000 back into Minnesotans' pockets by enforcing a new law I helped pass to fight wage theft. I also stood up to a Trump administration rule that would have removed overtime protections for 8 million workers nationwide.

I've been a steadfast champion to raise wages, including carrying the bill for a \$15 minimum wage and supporting workers on the front lines to unionize. As Attorney General, I will continue to support all working Minnesotans, including school employees, collectively organizing for better wages and working conditions.

What are your top two priorities to assist working families, should you be re-elected?

My top two priorities to continue to defend working families are to fight for a fairer economy and fairness for workers. I will continue to fight fraud, deception, and antitrust practices by corporations, protect Minnesotans' wages from theft, fight to lower pharmaceutical drug prices, hold opioid companies accountable for the deadly opioid epidemic, protect tenants from exploitation, and more.

What actions could you take as attorney general to address the education debt crisis? How will you hold loan service providers accountable?

Students take out loans for higher education to better their futures and afford their lives. Last month, I joined a coalition Attorneys General calling on the Biden

administration to cancel all publicly held debts for student borrowers. We need widespread action from the federal government to provide relief for many more.

As Attorney General, I hold for-profit schools and predatory loan-servicing companies accountable. We concluded a seven-year-long investigation and lawsuit against Minnesota School of Business/Globe University for defrauding students, winning more than \$40 million in restitution and debt-forgiveness for affected MSB/Globe students.

We've also won several million dollars in debt relief for former students of the now-defunct ITT Technical Institute. I'm fighting to discharge loans that ITT students took out when the school was engaged in systemic fraud. I've sought relief for students unfairly harmed by the sudden closure of Argosy University and Art Institutes.

My office has also won settlements from several private student-debt companies for misleading or defrauding Minnesotans. We have banned some of them from doing any more business in Minnesota. We need to do everything we can to ensure students who took out loans in good faith aren't shackled with debt for the rest of their lives.

### **Charter Schools:**

Since their inception, Minnesota has experienced challenges with charter schools, including financial solvency, quality of educational offerings, and exacerbating racial segregation.

Should charter schools and/or their sponsors be held accountable for finances, expenditures, management and educational practices?

I am highly skeptical as to whether many charter schools are succeeding in delivering an excellent education to their students. I do not support lifting the cap on charters and believe in independent oversight.

Should for-profit corporate entities be able to sponsor and run charter schools?

No. Charter schools should remain as non-profit entities, under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General's office.

What role does the Attorney General have in the oversight of charter schools?

The Attorney General has a crucial role in ensuring that as non-profits and recipients of state education funding, charter schools are using their funding appropriately and for the benefit of students and teachers.

I will use the power of the office to ensure that charter schools are held to equivalent standards as regular public schools. It's unacceptable to me when charter school leadership doesn't give teachers the ability to unionize if teachers choose to collectively bargain. As Attorney General, I will always defend the right of educators to join the union.

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

**Working with educators:**

What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations or news sources do you go to for your information on public education?

Serving in the Legislature and Congress throughout my career, I am well-versed in issues relating to public education. I believe in particular in listening to teachers, who are the best equipped to know the needs of their students.

How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are re-elected?

As Attorney General, I believe that it is essential to the work of governance to have good working relationships with labor leaders and members alike. I've enjoyed a long working partnership with Education Minnesota, and would continue that partnership as Attorney General as we continue to fight for workers, like protecting their right to form and joining a union, protecting their paychecks, and ensuring that they have the ability to live with dignity, safety, and respect.

Have you visited a public school in Minnesota in the past year? If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as attorney general? If not, would you like us to help arrange a visit?

In the past year, I've visited Becker High School, Eagan High School (Virtual), Sanford Middle School, and Folwell (Virtual).

My observations were caring and compassionate adults bringing out the best in our kids. I saw teachers doing their best over Zoom and adjusting to in-person after remote learning. I saw staff and students who are in need of support from burnout, the psycho-emotional toll of COVID, and the civil unrest following George Floyd's murder, economic inequality, and stress from every disaster.

This informs my work as Attorney General because our teachers, support staff, and kids deserve so much more. From protecting Minnesotan's paychecks to protecting tenants, I'm fighting to make sure everyone can afford their lives. I've

met with LGBTQ+ students from Becker who stood up to an anti-LGBTQ+ organization that espoused anti-transgender rhetoric. I'm protecting transgender students as Attorney General and will continue to protect the dignity of all our students.

**PELRA:**

Since its inception in 1971, the Public Employee Labor Relations Act has provided an orderly and constructive means of negotiating contracts between public employees and their employers. Minnesota statutes ensure public employees fair employment rights and the ability to be politically active.

Do you support any changes to the current collective bargaining process? If so, what changes do you support?

I support our current collective bargaining system. I have previously proposed and supported improvements such as making union organizing a civil right to help strengthen protections of collective bargaining and prevent discrimination against union organizing.

After eliminating fair share fees in *Janus*, anti-union groups have more recently set their sights on challenges to dues revocation windows, which limit the time when a member can revoke their obligation to pay dues in order to prevent members from joining the union briefly to obtain a specific benefit. Would you be willing to defend these provisions in union membership agreements, including those of Education Minnesota and our affiliated locals?

Yes. I will always fight for workers who exercise their legal right to join together and fight for higher wages and better working conditions.

Another anti-union target is exclusive representation, or the union's ability to negotiate terms and conditions on behalf of all members in a bargaining unit, regardless of whether or not they are members. Despite the loss of agency fee with *Janus*, Education Minnesota strongly supports the continuation of exclusive representation because we believe without it, employers could undercut unions by providing enhanced salaries or benefits to non-members. Do you support exclusive representation and would you be willing to defend this provision in PELRA if it is challenged in litigation?

Absolutely. Exclusive representation is a cornerstone of union solidarity and effective collective bargaining. The Attorney General's Office has vigorously and successfully defended the principle of exclusive representation in cases such as *Bierman v. Dayton*, 900 F.3d 570 (8th Cir. 2018.) Under my leadership, the Office will proudly continue that fight in any future litigation.

**State Board of Investment:**



As Attorney General, you would serve on the State Board of Investment. What will be your role and your priorities while serving on this Board?

My top priority has been and will continue to be to protect the ability of teachers and other state employees to retire with dignity by protecting state pensions.

**Higher Education:**

Funding for Minnesota's public colleges and universities has lagged in recent years, increasing the burden on parents and students through higher tuition. What is an appropriate level of funding for Minnesota's higher education system?

We must ensure that our students are not denied the opportunity for higher education because of the overwhelming burden of student loan debt. We must also invest in our public higher education institutions so that Minnesota continues to be a beacon of research and learning. I will continue to fight to make sure our higher education system is robustly funded and sees renewed investment.

**Constitutional Amendment:**

If you saw evidence that the Page Amendment, as currently drafted, would eliminate the legislature's funding obligations, increase the use of standardized testing to measure students, educators, and schools, or be used in legal challenges to require vouchers for private school tuition, how would you respond?

I am concerned about all those issues. I oppose vouchers, any reduction in funding, and reliance on high-stakes testing. Therefore, if there was clear evidence that the Page Amendment would impact those things it would make me concerned. I would absolutely be interested in reviewing any such evidence and I encourage anyone who has any to share it with me. If there is convincing evidence that that is the case, I would work to convene Education Minnesota and the authors of the Page Amendment immediately to work out solutions.

Would you be willing to work with Education Minnesota to seek changes to the proposed amendment that address our concerns while also including progressive measures that exist in other state constitutions, like class size limits and funding for universal preschool?

Absolutely. The invitation I have extended to Education Minnesota to offer revised language for the Page Amendment or one like it stands open.