

# Kari Rehrauer– Senate District 35

## Education Minnesota candidate questionnaire

### Education funding

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1. Education Minnesota believes the solution to closing the state’s racial opportunity gaps must include fully and equitably funding public education, from preschool to postsecondary institutions. There’s widespread agreement the full-funding agenda will require several billion dollars in new education investments. Please indicate your support or opposition to the following components of our full-funding agenda.

*Inflation: Reverse Minnesota’s perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it to inflation.*

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

*Universal pre-K: Provide universal pre-K taught by licensed teachers, so all children are ready for kindergarten.*

Yes    No



*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

*Student support: Provide additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.*

Yes  No

*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

*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

*ESP living wage: Ensure all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour.*

Yes  No

*Teacher compensation and benefits: Increase teacher compensation to provide competitive salaries and benefits to recruit and retain teachers.*

Yes  No

*Health care for all school employees: Make health insurance more affordable, fair and predictable for educators and school employees so they stay in the profession.*

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

*Higher education: Renew Minnesota's commitment to invest in the state's future by fully funding public higher education in Minnesota.*

Yes  No

## **Education Support Professionals**

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2. Do you support ESPs being able to access unemployment insurance in the summers, when they are not guaranteed work?

Yes  No

3. Will you support dedicated, paid training each year for education support professionals to get the training they need that is specific to their work and students' needs?

Yes  No

## Taxes/revenue

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4. 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

5. 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?

**Close tax loopholes for corporations.**

## Higher education

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

8. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with education debt?

**Ultimately, it would be best if the federal government offered student subsidized loans and grants that matched the costs of higher education tuition today. We cannot wait for the federal government, however, so the state needs invest in higher education to reduce tuition. In addition, these funds should be tied to tuition rate percentage increase caps. Finally, the state needs to provide increased debt relief for the workers in shortage areas including educators.**

9. Some college campuses have no counselors, while others have a ratio of 1:11,000 students. Will you support each Minnesota State campus having at least one counselor so students have access to mental health and academic support services?

Yes  No

## High-quality professional educators

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

**There is nothing more important for recruitment and retaining educators than fully funding education. If it were fully funded, educators could have the supports in place they need to help students, lower class sizes and caseloads, and livable salaries. Educators are only asking for what is reasonable. Right now, the stress of high class loads and little support just isn't worth it.**

11. Do you support changes to current law to include our fully-licensed Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) teachers in the continuing contract law?

Yes    No

## Teacher licensure

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12. Do you support changes to state law to allow Tier 1 teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit?

Yes    No

13. Do you support deleting the option in Tier 3 that allows a person to receive a full professional license without completing a teacher preparation program?

Yes    No

## Standardized testing

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

**Standardized tests have hurt education. There is too much reliance on MCA scores, which has led to curriculum designed to teach to the test. Creativity and fun are being lost. I believe we should get rid of the MCA's completely. More and more kids are opting out. We can have much better measures of success. Student, parent, and educator surveys and input would be a more comprehensive measure of the quality of a school. In the end, it is more important that students enjoy the learning process, grow over time, and leave high school believing in themselves than it is to have specific content measured.**

## Honesty in Education

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15. What can you do to protect teachers in the classroom and ensure that they have the freedom to teach?

**It is clear that we need equity and honesty in education. Minnesota has some of the largest racial disparities in education in the country. Every student deserves the ability to thrive in school. There are groups out there that do not support equity or teaching true history and have attacked our public schools (anti-CRT groups). It is important that educators know their rights. The union plays a huge role in this by advocating for its educators. I will ensure that union rights are preserved in Minnesota and PELRA stays firmly in place. In addition, I will vocally stand up for our educators and school districts supporting equity. Finally, we must support our Superintendents in standing up to the vocal minority of very loud folks that do not support equity and honesty. Every parent complaint is not equal and does not need to be listened to in the same way. A parent complaint that their student was discriminated against must be acted upon. A parent complaint that an educator or the district is teaching equity does not.**

16. Do you agree that Minnesotan students deserve an honest and accurate education about race that enables them to learn from the mistakes of our past so they can create a better future for all Minnesotans? Why or why not?

**Yes. I think I answered this above. I will add that I firmly believe every student in Minnesota deserves a fair, free, honest, and equitable public education and I will work to ensure this.**

## Time to Teach

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17. 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    No

18. 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

19. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and required meetings?

Yes    No

## Union Rights

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20. Do you support collective bargaining rights?

Yes    No

21. 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

22. Do you support teacher tenure and due process rights so the experts who work the most with students have the support to stand up for them?

Yes  No

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

I am a proud union member and ally. I was a member of Education Minnesota through a teaching career spanning 20 years and I now work as field staff for Education Minnesota. I could write pages about what a union means to me and how important they are, but I will boil it down for you. Unions have improved the lives of every single working person. Today our unions are *the* voice for workers to have a say in their working conditions on everything from safety, to pay, to their own professional development and review processes, to racial and social justice reforms.

As a Senator, I will stand up for the educators of Minnesota. In my current position as field staff for Education Minnesota I advocate on a regular basis for my members. I have to stand up to administration, superintendents, and school boards as a part of my position. I assist my local unions with collective bargaining and member organizing. Just this month, through organizing members in an informational campaign to their school board, we got a tentative agreement significantly better from what had been offered which also included wins on workloads and caseloads. I will fight just as hard as a Senator for all educators.

## Working families

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24. 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

25. Will you support continuing defined-benefits retirement systems for public employees?

Yes  No

26. Will you support providing the necessary state funding to ensure financial sustainability of public pension funds?

Yes  No

27. Will you support exploring new systems for providing educators with a secure retirement, including exploring early retirement options that might help recruit and retain educators?

Yes  No

28. What legislation could you introduce or support that would reduce the cost of health insurance to school districts? Where do you stand on health care for all?

**Ultimately, the best way to reduce health care costs and ensure affordable health care for all is to have a single-payer system. I support single-payer. Until we can get single-payer in place, we must use other available avenues to ease the burdensome cost of health care and health insurance. We can and should expand Medicare access and/or expand MinnesotaCare to include a buy-in plan.**

## Privatization

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

Yes  No

30. 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

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

Yes  No

32. Minnesota students, from different places and of different races, deserve well-resourced, welcoming schools. These needs are urgent and can't wait decades for lawyers and courts to force it to happen.

*Do you oppose efforts that would delete constitutional mandates for using taxation to fund public education funding and for providing equal access to public schools to all students?*

Yes  No

*Do you also oppose these same efforts that would enshrine standardized testing – with all its racial, cultural and economic biases – into the Minnesota Constitution?*

Yes  No

## Your role as a legislator

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33. 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?

**In my work as field staff with Education Minnesota, I visit schools and meet with educators regularly. I get to hear their personal stories and I have worked with them to prepare testimony for bills at the Capitol.**

34. 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 work directly with the members and leaders of Education Minnesota. I get my information from the members, leaders, and state organization of EdMN.**

35. 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?

**As closely as possible.**

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

**Since EdMN is the voice of the education professionals working directly with kids, they are the most informed group advocating for public education.**