

HD

58A – Kristi Pursell (D)

Education Minnesota candidate questionnaire

Education funding

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

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

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?

This questionnaire has hit on all of the ideas I've heard from our district's superintendent and school board leadership about how to make Minnesota's school funding, etc. more equitable, able to retain professionals, and best prepare educators for their challenging work.

Higher education

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?

The debt incurred by students for just their education today is astronomical! Some of our young people do not have access to federal funds to offset some of those costs, I'm interested to see what

programs in Minnesota we could strengthen to support students who may look to predatory lenders just so students can invest in their futures.

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

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

We need to make sure we're paying our educators what they are worth, we must continue supporting them to encourage them to stay in the profession, and reduce gun violence all across Minnesota and school shootings specifically. Unions can play a strong role as advocates for their members and with the same goals in mind to best support public school teachers and employees, we can get a lot done!

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

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

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

I believe the original idea behind standardized testing was to be able to show growth, highlight struggling students, and see students' performance change over time- important things to pay attention to! I do NOT believe decisions about school funding or teacher performance should be based on student scores: in lower-performing schools that encourages teachers to leave and/or teaching to the test, not real-world learning for the youth or teachers being able to stay in a struggling school to develop the long-term relationships and skills needed to better assist kids.

Honesty in Education

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

There are already so many ways for parents to be informed about what is being taught in the classroom, and opportunities to see it first hand! We can best train our teachers and support them in the work they do everyday by trusting them to tell the truth, compassionately, and in an age-appropriate manner.

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?

Absolutely. Minnesota has a sordid past regarding race relations and our youth deserve to know the truth about the formation of our state and its relationship to the Dakota nations who were here long before white settlers. Teachers need to be supported so that they may be comfortable knowing what to teach and how to teach it, not forced to ignore uncomfortable truths from the past. The youngest Minnesotans are from all cultural backgrounds and they should know their own and our collective history and how we got to where we are today.

Time to Teach

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

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?

Unions created the middle class, and I'm proud to be endorsed by several unions in this process already. My formative years were spent watching my Education Minnesota-member parents speak about the difficulties they faced day to day inside a public high school. I remember them on picket lines during strikes. I knew that collectively bargaining for rights and pay was key to being able to afford our lives and home. I will carry all of that with me as a legislator and know it will inform the decisions I make on a daily basis.

Working families

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?

School district employees, like any/all working or non-working Minnesotans deserve affordable, high-quality health insurance that includes mental, dental and eye health

Privatization

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

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?

Yes! My two children attend our public elementary school in Northfield. Although in the COVID-19 aftermath I've spent less time inside their school, I have great relationships with their teachers, paras, speech pathologists, front office workers, school board members, district superintendent and have many friends and acquaintances who teach in our public schools (across Minnesota!) and most of my

friends are parents of public-school attending youth. I would love to be introduced to teachers/school staff in New Prague and Lonsdale, however.

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 serve on the Northfield School District's Finance Advisory Board and have attended several Legislative Action Committee Zoom meetings with our district's superintendent, school board members, and community members wanting to advocate for fully funding our public schools in Minnesota. I learned a lot from them about the special education subsidy and the formula for how our schools are funded. I feel so fortunate to have friends who are teachers and work in our schools and a great relationship with our superintendent whom I can go to with any questions to hear his opinion.

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?

I would be so honored to have the endorsement from Education Minnesota, the union both of my parents were proud members of for their entire careers. There are many union-specific issues I don't have a full understanding of yet and hope that a partnership could be formed once I am elected to have a go-to person or two within your organization to be able to call up, email, text, or meet with to chat about what proposals are being brought forward at the state level that impacts our educators. If I disagree with you on an issue, or if you disagree with me, I'd hope we would have a regular enough open partnership and ongoing dialogue that we'd know that long before a vote takes place or a hearing happens.

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

I have shared my bias towards this particular education group, but I believe in transparency and open communication so I would hope all parties could hold space for conflicting ideas and points of view. If I'm put in the position of making a difficult decision, my goal is to have both communicated clearly and built up enough trust inside of our relationship that you would understand my position and why that is the way the vote went.