

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

**Page**

Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Mankato office

**Candidate name**

jessica navarro

**Election district**

19A

**Party endorsement**

DFL

**Email**

[jessnavarrodf@gmail.com](mailto:jessnavarrodf@gmail.com)

**Phone**

646.373.0032

**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?**

I'd initiate a thorough review of current retirement policies in the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA), seeking input from teachers of all backgrounds. Collaborating with stakeholders, including unions and experts, we'd propose reforms promoting

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

equity. The process would be guided by a commitment to transparency and open dialogue, ensuring all voices are heard and all concerns are addressed. I'd also advocate for resources to aid teachers in retirement planning, especially those facing socioeconomic or language barriers.

**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

**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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

**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**

**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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

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

more and greater grants to students. lower interest rate on loans. forgivable loans for public service. Textbook Affordability Initiatives: Implement initiatives to reduce the cost of textbooks, such as promoting open educational resources (OER) and encouraging faculty to adopt low-cost or free alternatives to traditional textbooks. This ensures that all students can access course materials without facing financial barriers.

**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?**

Give credit for remedial math and English. Have these credits count towards graduation. Fund apprenticeships and internships. Expand private and public projects for work experience. Provide mental health services with a cultural lens!  
Increased Funding for Student Support Services: Advocate for increased funding for student support services such as academic advising, tutoring, counseling, and mentorship programs. These services are critical for providing personalized support to students, especially those who may face additional challenges due to being first-generation or coming from underserved backgrounds.  
Expansion of Transfer Pathways and Articulation Agreements: Work to expand transfer pathways and articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions to facilitate the seamless transfer of students from underserved backgrounds. This would ensure that students who begin their education at a community college have clear pathways to continue their studies at a four-year institution without facing unnecessary barriers.  
Enhanced Support for Academic and Career Development: Advocate for initiatives that provide academic and career development support tailored to the needs of first-generation and underserved students. This could include expanding internship and job placement programs and providing resources for career exploration and professional development opportunities.

**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?**

Fund high-quality teacher preparation programs. Provide paid student teaching internships. Provide paid student-teacher advisors at the schools. protect teacher autonomy and class room instruction and management.  
Diverse Recruitment Strategies: Implement targeted recruitment efforts to attract educators from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented minority groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals with disabilities. This could involve partnering with community organizations, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and other institutions serving diverse populations to recruit talent actively.  
Flexible Work Arrangements: Explore flexible work arrangements such as part-time positions, job-sharing, and telecommuting options to accommodate the diverse needs of educators, particularly those balancing caregiving responsibilities or pursuing further education.  
Support for Well-Being and Mental Health: Prioritize the well-being and mental health of educators by providing access to resources and support services, including counseling, stress management workshops, and wellness programs. Investing in educator well-being can contribute to job satisfaction and retention.

**Standardized testing**

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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry # 1512**

Provide an after-school program, credit recovery, and tutoring. A standardized test can monitor school success and curriculum. Adjust the curriculum scope and sequence.

Systemic Changes: Advocate for systemic changes in education policy to reduce the overreliance on standardized testing as a measure of school and teacher effectiveness. Promote policies prioritizing a more holistic and comprehensive approach to assessment and accountability, considering students' and educators' diverse needs and experiences.

Diverse Assessment Methods: Encourage the use of diverse assessment methods beyond standardized testing to measure student learning and achievement. These could include project-based assessments, performance tasks, portfolios, and authentic assessments that better reflect students' abilities, strengths, and interests.

**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?**

protect school educators rights to select books and materials that meet the state standards. a parent opt out provision

Professional Development for Educators: Provide professional development opportunities for educators to understand the importance of diverse literature and develop strategies for integrating it into their curriculum. Educators should be equipped to defend students' right to read and facilitate meaningful discussions around sensitive topics.

Community Engagement and Dialogue: Foster open dialogue and engagement with parents, students, educators, and community members about the value of diverse literature and the importance of protecting students' freedom to read. Encourage respectful discussions about the significance of representation and the impact of censorship on students' intellectual development.

**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

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

**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

**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?**

Collaborating with Union Leaders: I would maintain open lines of communication with union leaders and representatives to understand their concerns and priorities and work collaboratively to address them through legislation and policy initiatives.

**Privatization**

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

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

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

Yes

**Your role 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?**

My visit to Faribault Middle School highlighted the need for enhanced training in culturally sensitive language and improved engagement with parents from diverse backgrounds. I observed the strain on staff providing translation services and will suggest the implementation of out-of-school interpreters to alleviate teacher/staff burnout. Additionally, I noted the importance of smaller

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #  
1512**

classroom sizes and increased classroom assistance, especially for teachers serving diverse communities where English is not the first language. This experience underscores my commitment to advocating for the unique needs of rural community schools, prioritizing resources and support to ensure all students receive equitable education opportunities.

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

Cheryl Freund, Local Union President and Negotiator  
John Bellingham Local union member -school board chair currently  
Carolyn Treadway, local educator, school board member  
Benet Freund, MSAD local president and negotiator  
all of these people serve on my committee.

Expert Consultation: I've consulted with education experts, researchers, and practitioners to seek their insights and expertise on specific topics or questions. This has provided valuable guidance and perspective on complex education issues. I will continue asking people to sit with me to learn from them.

Continual Learning: I prioritize ongoing Learning and self-improvement by seeking new information, perspectives, and opportunities for growth in my understanding of public education issues. This includes staying curious, asking questions, and remaining open to new ideas and evidence.

**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?**

Meet face-to-face with parties to find out what issues are and want to work toward common ground. Shared Goals and Values: I would identify areas of common ground and shared goals with Education Minnesota, focusing on areas where we can work together to advance the interests of students, educators, and the education system as a whole.

Transparent Communication: I communicate openly and transparently with Education Minnesota about areas of disagreement, clearly articulating my position and the rationale behind it. I would ensure that Education Minnesota understands my perspective and the factors influencing my decision-making process.

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

I will research issues, meet face-to-face to learn about their priorities, and try to reach a consensus.