

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1572**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

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Election district

50B

Party endorsement

DFL

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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?

Realistically, it will probably be fiscally impractical to significantly reduce the normal retirement age much below 65. (I worked at my "day job" until I was 67.) Pension premiums would have to have been much higher to support generous early retirement

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benefits. If the budget outlook improves significantly, there might be an opportunity for a one-time infusion of cash to bolster the pension fund balance to enable more generous retirement benefits.

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

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.

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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?

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

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

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

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Today's students are asked to bear a much higher share of the cost of higher education than earlier generations and this is not fair. In the next budget we have to at least provide enough funding for the U of MN and MNSCU to freeze tuitions and then work at actually reducing tuition over time.

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?

We have been underfunding both mental health services and remedial education for first generation college students and we need to address this issue in the next higher education budget, as well.

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?

Improved pay, job growth opportunities and good working conditions are essential to attracting and retaining workers in every profession and educators are no exception. We have to make sure that educators have the resources that they need to succeed as teachers.

Standardized testing

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

I believe that standardized test scores are a necessary tool to compare performance across schools; however, I have always believed that scores should be "normalized" by adjusting for the number of children at each site who are English as a Second Language learners, children who are eligible for free and reduced rate lunches (are we still collecting this data in the era of universal free school lunches?), children who relocate to a new school during the school year, children of refugees, etc. Not all children arrive at school equally prepared and supported and we shouldn't pretend that they are when we're comparing school performance. We be comparing expected vs actual school performance with all of the above factored into expectations.

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?

This year we passed a bill banning book bans and I fully supported and voted for that bill. Families should have access to a wide range of literature covering the full array of diverse life experiences.

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

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called social-emotional learning. Do you support increasing support for students' mental and emotional health in public schools?

Yes

Time to Teach

MoveDuplicate Settings Delete 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

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?

My voting record shows that I have always been a strong supporter of collective bargaining rights. For this reason, I have regularly been endorsed by a wide array of unions in my previous campaigns. I meet with the Bloomington Federation of Teachers every year.

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Privatization

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

Yes

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?

No

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?

I have visited Washburn Elementary and Oak Grove Elementary/Middle Schools in Bloomington, this year. Washburn is receiving an influx of children from Ecuadorian refugee families who are living in Bloomington. At Washburn, I visited special education classrooms and a special classroom for learners with emotional and behavioral disabilities. The teachers who work in these challenging settings are dedicated to their work and deserve our support.

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 meet regularly with both my School Board/Superintendent and the Bloomington Federation of Teachers, as well as Education Minnesota policy staff at the Capitol. I take information and direction from my House colleagues serving on the Education committees. I have always been able to rely on my seatmate, Heather Edelson in HD 50A, to help me sort out educational issues (and I will miss her).

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 speak regularly with Education Minnesota Policy staff during the session, and receive BFT members during their visits to the Capitol.

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

It is always a challenge to balance what I hear from my Superintendent and School Board members and what I hear from from local BFT membership (but that's part of the job!).

I must say that this questionnaire provides a long list of Education Minnesota priorities and most of them come with a stiff price tag. School Districts are already fiscally stressed from the loss of Covid relief funds and the Legislature is faced with a significant "structural deficit" forecast for the next budget cycle. It will be fiscally challenging to address everything on your list and it would help us if you could prioritize the items on your list.