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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

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Election district

55B

Party endorsement

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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?

I have served on the pension committee for two terms now and one of the hardest parts of it is feeling frustrated and helpless to be able to do more for our teachers. Trying to understand how keeping the pensions funds viable for the long term does very little

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to help our teachers who are suffering right now. I know that we dedicated \$31.5 million in educator's pensions, but I also know that that is far from enough. As the daughter of two college professors and having watched my youngest son struggle through out his educational experience, I know how important teachers are to our children and our community. Even without those lived experiences, I know how transformative good teachers that take the time to support and encourage students are. Long before I ever ran for office my mantra was pay our teachers and pay our nurses. Some of the most inspirational and consequential adults in my life were my teachers. Some of the best people in the lives of my children were teachers. We must do better.

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.

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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.

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?

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Yes

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

To be honest this is not my area of expertise. However, I would listen to the legislators that were working on ideas and policies to address that issue.

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?

That's interesting because I had school counselors from a higher education institution that I met with and they were telling me that just like in our K-12 schools, they have issues with the student to counselor ratio. I think they recognize that the students that will be a part of the North Star Promise will likely have unique needs that may require different resources than other students. I think one way we can help those students is to increase the number and availability of higher ed support personnel and identify the resources they may need to help ensure the success of those students.

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?

Yes

High-quality professional educators

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

We know that increasing teacher' salaries, smaller class sizes, access to affordable and quality healthcare, student teaching stipends, and better pensions to name a few would be incredibly helpful towards meeting that goal.

Standardized testing

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

That's a hard one. I don't believe that test scores measure a students ability to learn, to retain information, or in any way measures what students are capable of. Whether it's anxiety or some a variety of other issues, some students aren't great at tests but clearly know the material. Currently our education system does not allow for the multitude of different ways that students learn. We continue to use a one size fits all approach to education and it doesn't work for all of our kids. I admit that I don't know the answer, I just know that we need to find ways to reach all of our students to meet them where they are at, foster how they do learn and meet their individual needs.

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?

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We did pass legislation this past biennium that put a ban on book bans. I think that we need to support our media experts that are trained to know about age and subject appropriate materials for our students to have access to. We know it's vital that our students see themselves reflected in many ways through their educational experience whether it's seeing themselves in the teachers in their classrooms or other adults in authority or having materials that reflect them available to them, or teaching them accurate history.

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

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?

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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?

As vice-chair of the Labor committee and long time union activist and leader, protecting the rights of union members has been my top priority. I ran on working families rights and protections and I will always center workers in all that I do. I will vote against anything that weakens those rights and protections while continuing to innovate and support policies that are pro worker.

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?

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?

Yes. I visited Burnsville High School with Chair Youakim to tour and learn about our Pathways program-which is amazing. In speaking with the teachers who are part of the Pathways program, it was neat to hear about the students that had struggled in their other classes but that really found their way in the Pathways program. That is one way that we are reaching our students that are maybe non-traditional learners as well as showing them a different way towards success. Both of my kids graduated from Burnsville and I know what a diverse student population we have. I know that we have an issue with class sizes which was one of the reasons that my youngest struggled at the high school. Once we got him into BAHS the alternative high school, the much smaller class sizes was helpful.

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 have sat on the Education Policy committee for both of my terms and have had the opportunity to engage on many issues. I also sit on the pension committee and have learned so much from that as well. To be honest, I tend to interact the most with Ed MN folks and teachers both from my area and across the State. I also interact with the School Counselor Association as well as the School Nurses and Social Workers. I meet a lot of teachers when I door knock and have the opportunity to talk with them and learn from their experiences.

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?

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I hope to always work with Ed Mn and I have done so during each of my terms. If I disagree I will and have had honest conversations about what ever the issue is.

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

That will just take honesty and communication, weighing out the multiple points and information given and ultimately standing in my integrity in whatever decision I make. The point of the work is not to appease any one organization, but to find the best ways to support our students and their families. Most of the time that means collaborating with organizations that have that goal as the center of their efforts, and other times it may mean taking a different path. There is no shortage of competing agendas at the Capitol and most of the time difficult decisions need to be made which can mean falling out of favor from time to time with organizations. My job is to try to make the most effective and honorable decisions no matter how hard they are, to do the best for my community and all Minnesotans.