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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Duluth office

**Candidate name**

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**Election district**

7B

**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?**

I understand that a two tier pension system exists with penalties attached for teachers hired after July of 1989. I would support efforts to reduce penalties associated with retirement. Burnout is a true issue given the difficulties experienced by students and

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teachers in a classroom. Other professions experience similar situations and are treated at a higher level of professionalism which is also due teachers. Allowing teachers to retire earlier without penalty will put new teachers who have the latest educational strategies and tools in the workforce ensuring that our students achieve today's educational goals.

**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

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**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?**

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

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

As the CareerForce Director for the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), I saw first hand what happens when individuals are struggling under the weight of costly education and when education is unobtainable. As a legislator I would work to further programs that allow individuals to access an education that fits for them including public loan forgiveness programs, reduced or free higher education for certain fields or demographics and incentivize entering the field of education. The cost of education continues to grow and prevents many individuals from accessing it. This must be contained. I would support efforts to keep public dollars for public education.

**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?**

I support the North Star Promise program to make college affordable for greater numbers of students, especially first generation students and students from historically underserved communities . District 7B has two community and technical college campuses of Minnesota North within its borders and the North Star Promise program can help to increase enrollment. Connecting to available wrap-around supports for students will be important to ensure their success. My background in Community Action work can help inform those needed supports.

As a Bush Fellow, I worked with Hibbing Community College and helped create the EMPOWER program. This program focused on recruiting and training low-income women and girls, especially women and girls of color, to access training in non-traditional fields. EMPOWER was supported through public and foundational funding and I would welcome further development of similar programming to broaden this model to other demographics and industries.

**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?**

Offering world class classroom settings and positive welcoming work environments through support at the state level with right-size funding and reduced unfunded mandates would motivate community members to enter the field of education. By addressing things such as pensions, planning time, cost of entry, living wages and high quality benefits, and class size it will make the field more desirable. Additionally, the ability to bargain for workplace improvements and ease of ongoing professional development is key to a strong workforce.

It is important for students to see educators that look like themselves as well. I would incentivize teachers of diverse backgrounds to enter the field through ongoing support of scholarship targeted programs. I also support Grow Your Own programs that encourage Education Support Professionals (ESPs) to earn credit and quickly become teachers themselves.

**Standardized testing**

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

Test scores are poor measures of a student's growth. A test score is only a snap-shot of a point in time and affected by multiple factors including what is happening at home, or in the community – rather than directly correlated only to instruction received in the classroom. A student's basic needs and health concerns must be met before they can adequately achieve a standardized test. Test scores are not the only factor that can show student growth.

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Schools should be allowed to use funding provided, supported by local data, from the State in an efficient manner. As a legislator I would work with our local school districts and Education Minnesota to identify quality student growth assessments that may replace standardized testing. This would reduce costs for standardized testing services and planning.

**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?**

I agree with educators. I believe that it is important for parents to be involved in their student's education, and I also believe it imperative to trust licensed media specialists who are well-versed in current teaching strategies for student success. These trained professionals can help determine diverse and age-appropriate books and other resources. Schools are the great equalizer – helping students from all backgrounds succeed and become productive citizens. Connecting with and inspiring students is at the heart of education. School books and resources must reflect the diversity of our communities. As a legislator I would safeguard a students' freedom to read by supporting our current legislation against book bans and support any future legislation that improves the range of books within our school libraries and classrooms.

**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?**

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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?**

I believe in a worker's right to collective bargain. I will support unions by reviewing laws through this lens. Unions are core to the success of my district, whether that be teachers, nurses, laborers, steelworkers, or others and therefore bills or laws I support must help the people in my communities thrive. Core to my campaign is Iron Range Strong and I know that this includes unions and the people that make up their membership. I am committed to understanding their issues and what will improve the lives of my community members.

**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 not visited a school in the last year as a candidate but have visited as an attendee at community gatherings. I have followed the development of the local school district consolidation very closely. I would welcome visits arranged by Education Minnesota to any school district within the area I will serve. I continue to have many educators in my network of friends and we often discuss what is happening with education in our communities. Teachers are expected to care for the future of our communities – our students – with limited resources and plenty of opinions on how to do the job. I intend to take an active role in reducing those

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pressures.

I retired in April of 2023 but prior to retirement, as the CareerForce Director for the State of Minnesota, I worked closely in many workforce related endeavors with community colleges.

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

As I said in my last answer, many educators are within my own personal network. Troy Caddy an educator at Rock Ridge, is one of the co-chairs of my campaign. I have discussed educational issues with Julie Sandstede, Mike Raich, Cassandra Hainey, Irene Henderson and many others. These connections have allowed me to stay informed of the ongoing education situation locally. I would continue to have those conversations with them as I legislate as well as the local educators union. Each school has its own leadership board that I would connect with, and continue my relationship with the Iron Range Service Unit, to ensure I was understanding the issues of large and small districts in my communities. I also would call on Education Minnesota for support regarding certain issues.

**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 use Education Minnesota as a sounding board for proposals that are coming up at the Legislature and I would seek them out for clarity on issues I might not fully understand. I would leverage the organization and local expertise to address these issues. I believe we find our most creative answers through disagreement and have no concern about sharing this with whom I am speaking. I would communicate with Education Minnesota to request further information to form the best possible solution to get us to a combined result and above all, I would be honest regarding my perspective.

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

Throughout my career I have often had to balance competing priorities. I would draw on the expertise of fellow party leaders, Education Minnesota, and my community to help the important issues rise to the surface.