

## 2020 Senate District 66 DFL Candidate Questionnaire

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Position Candidate Is Seeking The Endorsement For: Minnesota State House - 66B

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Please respond to the following questions, limit 5 pages for the entire questionnaire.

**1. Education** What should the state do to address the educational needs of our children, the working conditions of our teachers, and educational opportunities for adults?

Childcare in Minnesota is one of the most expensive in the nation. We need to invest in making high quality childcare affordable for all Minnesota families. Research is clear that giving our kids quality care in the early years is critical in preparing them for school. As for K-12, our educators have been clear - our schools need funding for smaller class sizes, social services and mental health and enhanced support for English language learners. Students across the state would benefit from this approach - it narrows the achievement gap and is the right thing to do for our students. This means we need increased revenue from top earners and corporations so that we have to rely less on property taxes and levies. As a legislator, I believe we need to listen to our educators and parents to make sure we give our students every opportunity to succeed.

**2. Youth Services** What would you do to better support our youth population?

Our youth need to be systematically supported. That starts with full service community schools to make sure they get all of the support they need to grow and thrive. They also need to know that all of them have the capacity to live meaningful lives as adults, where they can make a living wage, not have to worry about bankruptcy from medical debt, or having their housing expenses continue to increase where they never feel like they get a fair shot at putting down their own roots. We need to continue to expand opportunities for young people to do that, whether it is through deeply affordable two and four year college or trade schools. We are prosperous enough as a state where we all should be able to live comfortable lives and do work that we find meaningful, but we need to recognize that young people acutely feel these crises and they feel that they are being left behind.

**3. Senior Services** As the size of the aging population grows, how would you address the increasing needs of seniors?

We need to aggressively plan more for Minnesota's aging population. We need to give seniors every opportunity to age in place, as well as increase the number of care workers that will likely be needed to assist many of them, in the living situation that best aligns with their wishes. We need to work with the senior community to find solutions that work for them and serve their needs in innovative ways. We need to start pilot programs now to find out which of those programs can work best so that we can replicate them at scale. As a corollary of that, we need to make sure that seniors feel meaningfully connected to their communities, and I'll work to expand programs that can meet their varied interests and needs. Many of my other priorities will also directly benefit seniors - single payer healthcare will make sure all Minnesotans are covered, and expanded transit to deal with climate change will also help seniors have greater access to their communities. Lastly, we need to do more to protect our seniors from abuse, whether it be from those who would seek to defraud them or abuse them in assisted living settings.

**4. Environment** 4a) In your view, what should be the state's role in mitigating and preventing climate change impacts? 4b) On a state level, do you oppose the construction of Enbridge Line Three?

The state should have a central role in preventing climate change. Nearly all policies impact our carbon footprint, so all of our policy areas need to have an environmental lens to make sure we do as much as we can to deal with the climate crisis. In particular, I support moving to 100% renewable energy in Minnesota; expanding public transit, and exploring making it free or nearly free to increase ridership; and working with our city and county partners concerning planning and bonding to reduce our carbon footprint. We need to push for greener building codes to help continue to manage our growth. Lastly, we need someone that keeps an eye towards equity while fighting for environmental justice. Communities of color and those living in poverty are going to be the most impacted by continued climate change, and we need someone who will be a champion for them, to make sure they are not left behind in our climate policy. I also oppose the Enbridge Line 3. We should endeavor to find capital projects that don't further endanger the environment or threaten the rights of our tribal communities.

**5. Mining** 5a) What is your stance on copper-nickel mining in the state of Minnesota? 5b) What alternative proposals do you suggest to bring needed jobs to the area?

Many of the copper and nickel mining projects currently proposed in northern Minnesota pose significant and potentially irreversible damage to our environment. Especially as climate change impacts weather patterns, proposed plans do not do enough to assure our waters will not be poisoned. Statewide access to high speed internet and a return to deeply affordable two and four year college and job training programs should be driving the economy of northern Minnesota. I would like to see even more explicit matching efforts from the IRRRB in the range region on top of statewide tools to add additional impact as well.

**6. Immigration** 6a) What concrete steps will you take to ensure immigrant Minnesotan's rights are protected/to protect these communities from unreasonable fear of deportation? 6b) Do you support the abolition of ICE on a federal level and noncooperation with ICE on the state level?

We should be as uncooperative with ICE as we are legally capable of being. We should be welcoming of all people, regardless of their immigration status, and that includes standing up for their rights as humans. While the state legislature cannot abolish ICE, since it is federal, Minnesota should be able to review and veto any ICE action before it takes place in our state. We must not be complicit with detaining people for ICE in any facilities in Minnesota.

7. **Labor** A new wage theft law was passed last year, yet there has already been a hearing to attack this legislation. Business owners and other employers feel that it is a burden and that there is too much confusion adhering to the law. In addition, employers are trying to get around this legislation by misclassifying workers as independent contractors (see legislation against this practice in HF4009/SF4018). What will you do to protect workers and this law?

In matters of wage theft, the government should be standing up for workers. I don't see wage theft laws as a burden on business - I see them as a necessary check on businesses. I'll fight against business trying to play games by reclassifying workers as contractors, and I'll work with labor to make sure that the legislation is crafted in a way to get that done.

8. **Transportation** Public transportation often gets reduced in areas where it is most needed. In your view, what should the state do about public transit infrastructure while addressing concerns about access and affordability?

Hands down the most meaningful first step we could take to clean up our transportation system would be to electrify our bus system. We also need to significantly expand our Bus Rapid Transit systems so service is more realistic to get folks to jobs and get them there on time. Lastly, we absolutely need to get to fair free transit statewide as soon as we can. Metro Transit alone spends millions enforcing fares that could otherwise go to simply providing transit access to those who need it. Free fares means more people would ride, taking more cars off the road. It means no one would be criminalized for riding the train. It means more people would have access to moving around in a sustainable way.

9. **Housing** We are in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. What would you do to advocate for our district and the state in solving this crisis?

As federal resources have fallen off, state resources have failed to meet the needs of our communities and local governments have been left to pursue local housing trust funds and public-private partnerships to expand services and shelter space. Basic steps should be taken immediately to expand those resources. The state should match local housing trust funds dollar for dollar to accelerate affordable housing development. The legislature should invest significant funds in virtually every capital bonding bill to provide support for shelters, affordable housing, and workforce housing statewide. That housing must also work for all Minnesotans, meaning we need to not leave anyone behind, whether it be members of the LGBTQ community that may have difficulty finding housing or multigenerational families that require more space than efficiency units.

10. **Food Security** Would you support the State of MN funding breakfast, lunch and snacks for all Pre K thru 12 school children in public schools with no fees?

Yes.

11. **Healthcare** 11a) In your view, is healthcare a human right? 11b) Do you support passing single payer healthcare for Minnesota, and what would the transition look like? If not, what is your proposal to provide affordable healthcare for all Minnesotans?

Yes, healthcare is a human right. I support a single payer system similar to Senator Marty's plan, although I would work to include dental care and long-term care as well. We should move to that system as quickly as possible. The fact that we have not been able to get the job done up to this point is a significant moral failure on our part to stand up for healthcare as a human right.

**12. Cannabis** 12a) The current medical cannabis program is not affordable (\$250 for certification, \$200 to participate, and hundreds of dollars for the medication) Will you work to make this affordable and accessible to all? 12b) Do you support the legalization of cannabis for adult use in Minnesota? 12c) If cannabis for adult use were to be legalized in Minnesota, what measures will you take regarding Minnesotans currently incarcerated under cannabis-related non-violent drug charges?

Medicinal cannabis should be treated like any other physician prescribed medication - it should be affordable to those that need it. Reducing regulatory fees that come with it would be one easy step, and it would be consistent with broader cannabis legalization. Experience with other states show that cannabis legalization is good policy - it brings in tax revenue and decreases underage use. We should also be working to release and expunge the records of those who are currently incarcerated non-violent cannabis offenses.

**13. Gun Control** What is your position on gun control, and what specific legislation would you be willing to sponsor?

We need swift and decisive action to address gun violence in Minnesota and across the country. That starts with foundational policies like universal background checks, restrictions on violent offenders owning guns, and more restrictive conceal and carry rules. I would also like to explore restricting access to ammunition, as this has proved fruitful in other regions. Minnesota must be a leader in addressing this crisis, and I am committed to fighting for immediate progress in this area.

**14. Women's Rights** Do you support the ERA becoming a part of the Minnesota Constitution?

Yes. Women and men must be equal in our constitution.

**15. Diversity** The folks at the endorsing convention will not fully reflect the diversity of gender identities, racial and ethnic identities, and religious affiliations in our community; if elected/re-elected what do you see as your role in addressing the needs of folks underrepresented?

As a woman of color and a diversity, equity, and inclusion professional, I know that often the people who most need representation are the least likely to be able to be part of the process to acquire that representation. More than simply speaking on behalf of these underrepresented groups, I see it as my responsibility to seek out and confer with these groups, build trust and understanding within them, and work with them to represent their priorities at the capitol. This requires the participation of individuals and organizations, and making sure that people who are a part of these underrepresented groups have seats at the table when decisions are made.

**16. Corporate Money in Politics** 16a) Do you take campaign contributions from corporate PACs? 16b) What is the approximate average individual donation size currently to your campaign? 16c) What would you support at the state level to curb the role of corporate money in politics?

I have not accepted any corporate PAC. My average donation is \$93. We need to do more than be able to trace money, we need greater transparency laws to find out how legislators are making decisions, which means that members of the legislature should be subject to data practices requests, like all other state agencies. We should also seek more stringent penalties against those who violate campaign finance rules and ethics - they are a violation of the public's trust.

**17. Ranked Choice Voting** 17a) Do you support ranked choice balloting, locally and the state-wide level? 17b) What do you see as positives and negatives of ranked choice voting?

For general elections, I support ranked choice voting. As a positive, they let people express a slate of preferences, which is more consistent with their actual beliefs. It may take more time to know the results of an election and it may require education to get people accustomed to the system, but the end result of having a democracy that more closely mirrors our preferences is absolutely worth the additional work.

**18. Public Health/Emergency Preparedness** 18a) If elected, what steps will you take to ensure that Minnesota is better prepared for the next pandemic? 18b) What steps should Minnesota be taking for emergency preparedness (such as COVID-19, grid collapse, etc.)?

Our shortage of PPE for our frontline health workers and those providing necessary services is outrageous. I believe we need to act regionally to be able to better source items during times of crisis and to use our joint bargaining power to drive prices down instead of up. We should be asking our public health experts to make their assessments and make judgements based off of those assessments, rather than the ad hoc rantings of Donald Trump. We should be prepared to take bold, independent action as a state to protect our people. Continual preparedness drills and exercises at the state level for likely crises are the best way to make sure we can effectively respond to any crisis.

**19. Consensus Building** What are your strengths for positive community outreach and consensus building?

Our Representative should be a front line organizer because they are our closest contact to state government. That means not just listening to people who actively seek out contact, but going door by door, call by call, and vote by vote to make sure we hear every perspective from across our district. Prior to caucus, my team and I knocked on more than 2000 doors to hear community input and get them excited for 2020. We need leaders who will do that work not just when it is convenient, not just at election time, and not just when there is a challenger. I've worked as a consensus builder as Senior Director of Diversity & Inclusion in my current position at the MN State Bar Association, and I pride myself on my relationship management skills. I work with lawyers and judges across the state, discussing the important, but often uncomfortable topic of diversity and equity. I am particularly skilled at meeting individuals where they are at, and overcoming common roadblocks or oppositions, so that we are able to address the key issues that are important to all of us. I honestly believe that there is more that brings us together, than there are things that divide us; I am always eager to learn about our commonalities and work on issues from there.