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## **2018 MFT59 Candidate Questionnaire**

If you are seeking the MFT endorsement you need to fill out this questionnaire and attend the open screening on March 26th. An endorsement by the MFT means you are seeking a partnership to improve our students education by investing resources in schools.

**Please limit the following questions to a yes or no response.**

1. As recently as September, 2017 the organization ED Allies hosted a mayoral forum the asked specifically about mayoral appointments to the MPS school board. There have been calls both on a national and local levels to either restrict the power of elected school boards or eliminate them entirely.

**Will you publicly oppose efforts to dismantle a democratically elected Minneapolis Board of Education? Yes**

**2. The current Board of Education has said they will place a two-question referenda on the 2018 ballot in order to raise necessary, stable funding for our students and schools.**

**Will you and your campaign endorse, support, and campaign for this referenda? Yes**

3. Recently the City of Minneapolis passed a \$15 an hour minimum wage. This was a major victory for working families in Minneapolis. Raising household income is an important strategy to improving student outcomes. However, the City of Minneapolis ordinance does not apply to most public sector employees like those in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

**Will you vote make \$15 a minimum wage for all employees and bargaining units in MPS as soon as possible? Yes**

4. If public sector labor law changes, will you support status quo contract language to ensure the health of public sector unions within MPS. For example, currently under PELRA a union has the right to be in the workplace to conduct business.

**If this requirement changes in state law, will you support creating contract language to ensure practices like this do not change? Yes**

**5. Will you abide by your political party's endorsement? Yes**

**6. Will you run against a candidate that MFT endorses? Yes**

## **Section II**

**Please limit your response to 200 words or fewer.**

1. MPS has a diverse student population, where over 65% of students identify as people of color. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent educators and curricula that reflect the diversity of our city. What concrete changes will you seek to improve opportunities for student success? How will you ensure equitable distribution of resources to attain equal opportunity for all? *The larger issue is support for public education. We are fighting against disinvestment in public education because of privatization and ed reform policies promoting choice and charter schools, vouchers and dismantling unions. We are fighting to attract and retain students because people are buying in to the reform education narrative that public schools are failing. Their narrative is a product of millions invested in high priced marketing firms that know how to sell an idea. Accountability, testing, teachers are the reason students are failing, competition, and poverty is not an excuse are all messages driven by ed reform to destabilize traditional public education systems. I have been an outspoken*

*advocate against privatization and education reform. I am enemy number one to ed reformers in Mpls, including Chris Stewart, Josh Crosson, Rashad Turner, Dan Sellers, TFA, Ed Allies, & Mn Comeback. The Progressive Ed PAC raised \$270,000 in 2014 to work against my re-election. This group continues to see me as a threat and works to discredit me and other Board members who also call out ed reform and those who are working against our public schools. I will continue this advocacy and remain strong in my commitment to MPS students, families, and employees.*

2. MFT is concerned about the turnover of educators, particularly educators of color, who are leaving MPS. Given the statewide teacher shortage, retention is even more important now than before. Will you direct the superintendent to work with MFT in partnership to ensure MPS attracts and retains teachers of color? *Yes, and I supported the recent language in the MFT contract that protected our Grow Your Own grads who are predominantly teachers of color. I also supported the Superintendent's equity impact assessment of HR and the hiring of a position to support retention efforts specifically for teachers of color. Unfortunately, the person hired from Gen Next is a known reform education advocate. I have pushed in our policy committee, along with other Board members, to have a Board level conversation about "conflict of interest" and our stance on whether we believe employing individuals that support and advocate for the reform education agenda meant to dismantle public education is in conflict with the mission of MPS. We supported having this conversation in our policy meeting and our policy Chair, Director Ellison, is suppose to bring this to the full Board for consideration.*

3. As an elected board member you will be presented with information from Davis Center administration to inform your votes. Employees with direct contact with students may have a different view of how board decisions have/are/will impact our schools. For example, the frequency, number and efficacy of standardized tests is a hotly contested issue. How will you reconcile the

different sources of information? Where will you seek out understanding of complex issues facing our schools? *I already seek out information from school employees, parents, and students. As a citywide School Board member for eight years, I have engaged with every school in the District about a variety of issues. I also look at data from the state reporting systems, including SLEDS. Furthermore, I continue to ask questions and dig further in to the information provided by Administration. The issue currently is the difficulty of getting information and having access to data in a timely manner that has sufficient context and level of detail to inform our decisions. Currently, I'm working with some Board members to put forth resolutions to update the data requests currently available to the Board.*

**4.** MPS is starting to have conversations about the future of our district. This strategic planning may impact boundaries, transportation, and funding to name a few possible outcomes. If elected, what would you prioritize in a rewritten strategic plan? *I would prioritize retaining strong school pathways in every community and increasing market share and retaining students. We must look at fiscal stability and sustainability that allows us to provide a robust, well rounded (full service school model) academic experience for all students. This includes strong student support services, preK and parent education programs, as well as extracurricular opportunities for students to enjoy athletics, arts, and a global education. I understand and agree with the mantra that we can do anything but not everything. However, a global education with wrap around services and access to career and college pathways must be the foundation of our schools.*

**5.** While the Federal and State governments haven't met their funding obligations, MPS has also saddled itself with needless costs in an effort to improve outcomes. Many of these have created legacy costs that come at the expense of funding core programming and these initiatives are now being considered for elimination under the current budget. Explain your background in

and understanding of school finance, budgeting, and how you will balance tradeoffs between meeting the demands of vocal advocates and meeting the needs of all students. *As a Citywide School Board member in my 8th year of service, I have a strong grasp on the budget, education finance, legislative actions, accountability, and the equitable funding model we have in MPS. Our traditional high schools, for example, range from just over \$6000 per pupil to just over \$10,000 per pupil allocation. As you can see by the graphic below, our three largest high schools receive 21-32% less funding than Edison, 24-35% less than Henry, so forth and so on. The same differentiated funding exists K-5, K-8 & 6-8. The way I balance those who have power & access with the need for equity is to fully understand the issues and communicate the what, how and why to individuals who often misunderstand categorical funding, supplanting, how money is generated and allocated, and the differentiated needs throughout our District. I also value ALL students and believe equity includes everyone so I never discount anyone's concerns.*

SCHOOL (PER PUPIL) ~ Poverty%	Edison (\$8839.00) ~ 78.4%	Henry (\$9286) ~ 77.6%	North (\$10,662) ~ 80.6%	Roosevelt (\$8510) ~ 64.1%
SOUTH (\$6960) ~ 55.3%	21%	25%	34%	18%
SOUTHWEST (\$6168) ~ 39.1%	30%	33%	41%	27%
WASHBURN (\$6013) ~ 37.6%	32%	35%	43%	29%

**6 .** MFT has been pushing to reduce reliance on standardized testing and personalized learning strategies that are costly to maintain year over year, change draconian employee evaluation systems to improve teacher effectiveness and professional growth, and put more resources into fundamental supports for students. The superintendent has repeatedly asked for direction from the board in determining what changes in programming to

make. What will you prioritize in the budget? How will you come to your decision about how to fund our schools and where money goes in the budget? *I asked for part of our pro forma vote in December to include directing the Superintendent to reduce standardized assessments, evaluations and data collection to the state minimum. This amendment failed 4-5, supported only by Directors Felder, Jourdain and Walser. I will continue to support this direction. I opt my child out of standardized assessments and share this with parents. I will continue to prioritize equitable access to academic opportunities and student supports (i.e. social workers, counselors, AVID). I will also prioritize equitable access to electives and pathways like IB, AP, CTE, PSEO, concurrent enrollment, and world language because students without access outside of school are disparately impacted when we reduce opportunities for arts, music, sports, and academic offerings in our schools.*

7. Parents, educators, and students agree that our schools need to be safe, welcoming, and stable places in order for students to learn, educators to teach, and parents to feel welcome in their children's school. As a board member, what specific steps will you take to help create a safe and healthy learning environment for our students? *I proposed to Superintendent Graff and Chief Arradondo to implement a model similar to the downtown ambassador program. This model would employ a trained community member (or members) in our schools but maintain a relationship with trained SROs who are the beat cops in the communities surrounding our schools, available to respond if needed. I would expect MPD to cover the costs of the SROs, and we would reallocate funding to a community model. I will continue to advocate in our legislative agenda for increased funding for student support staff and trainings like trauma informed care which we have implemented at Bethune. I would move towards a budget that fully invests in restorative practices as well as full service community school models that provide the supports our students and families need in our school buildings.*

8 . As a board member, what specific steps will you take to hold the district administration accountable for implementing with fidelity restorative practices that seek to end racially predictable disciplinary outcomes in our schools? *Our policy change and OCR agreement have given us a pathway to fully implementing restorative practices. However, we have replaced punitive discipline with a culture that perpetuates the soft bigotry of low expectations. Students aren't held to a high standard of respect and other students, staff and teachers are often physically in harms way or verbally and mentally abused. Students must be on time, respectful, and considerate of others. We are doing students a huge disservice by not holding everyone to high standards of appropriate school and classroom behavior. I want to revisit the cell phone policy to look at the impact of allowing cell phone use in our schools. I also want to get city wide student government, school site councils and parent advisory groups more involved in the conversation of school climate and culture. Restorative practices require that our teachers and employees have the ability to build relationships with students. We also must ensure access to student support services, including mental health and chemical dependency experts.*

9. Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) is a model that centers community need and decision making. A coordinator leverages community resources that could meet community needs around integrating academics, physical and mental health, social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. Research shows this model improves student achievement, attendance, student engagement, graduation rates, and parent involvement. Resources located at FSCS are based on a needs assessment of the surrounding community to determine what is necessary for the community it is serving. This transforms schools into a community center designed to meet the needs of the whole child and build social capital in the community. Schools can become centers for families all day, every day, evenings and weekends. **Over the next four**

**years, would you support the growth of the Full Service Community Schools model? If yes, how would you ensure dedicated funding sources?** *Yes. Looking forward to a future with additional funding from our referendum, I would work with other school board members to prioritize the full service community school model and begin by dedicating funding for hiring staff to begin the process of bringing partners to the table AND staff to audit and identify the unique needs of our schools. This would include the space requirements for putting service providers in our buildings.*

**10.** Every school has unique strengths and areas to improve. The current budgeting process has created a system of schools where some students have access to art, music, language, and media centers while others schools cut those programs to fund other initiatives within the school. Additionally, some schools have even greater needs for resources and funding to meet the basic needs of students and are forced to make even bigger trade offs between basic needs and programming that makes our schools special. **As a board member, how will you ensure the MPS budget process prevents the difficult trade offs between things like related service professionals (social workers, nurses, counselors, psychologists) and behavior deans and safety monitors?** *Part of the comprehensive district wide assessment is establishing foundational programming for MPS at every level (K-5, K-8, 6-8 & HS). Then we can tie our budget allocations specifically to our foundational programming. I strongly support a well rounded, holistic education that includes electives and extracurriculars as well as career & college academic pathways. I believe the health and well being of students physically, mentally, socially, emotionally are equally important to achieving better academic outcomes. Due to inadequate state and federal funding, we can't always prevent this difficult trade off, however, I will continue to push ideas and solutions that reallocate money to schools and prioritize resources to schools over administration and unnecessary accountability systems.*

**11.** Standardized assessment should be used by educators to support instruction based on the students' needs. They should not be used in high stakes decisions the Board or district makes. The federal law Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, gives states and districts some flexibility regarding testing. Under the new MN Department of Education waiver, standardized testing is limited to ten hours a year. **To increase the amount of time students are learning, what direction will you give the superintendent to reduce the amount of time spent on standardized testing?** *I will reintroduce my directive to the Superintendent for FY20 that we reduce assessments, evaluations and data collection to the state minimum and hope I have a majority Board support this time. I was on the test reduction state task force, and after several constructive meetings, the Commissioner of Education walked the committee back to a recommendation that did very little to actually reduce assessments. ESSA still requires every grade level 3rd-8th. I will continue to advocate, however, for a state waiver for HS that only requires one nationally normed assessment and believe who we elect as governor 2018 will be key.*

**12.** MPS is losing special education teachers and assistants at an alarming rate. While the MFT supports implementation of inclusionary practices, the district has not sufficiently prepared and trained our staff through this transition. **What steps can MPS take to retain special education professionals?** *The issues I have found with our SpEd professionals is timely and adequate training, ensuring safe working conditions, and SpEd substitute teaching pool so no students ever goes without academic opportunities. If there is a way to provide differentiated pay to attract and retain SpEd professionals, especially in certain licensure areas and for level 4 EBD settings, I would be interested in considering that option. Will you support closing the \$2 an hour general education/special education pay disparity amongst Educational Support Professionals?* Yes.

13. Quality daycare and preschool programs staffed by trained educators are critical to helping children to be school ready . Yet, MPS has a waitlist for its own pre-k programs. **How can the Minneapolis Public Schools reduce the pre-k waitlist?** *We have the Gordon/Willard buildings sitting with an architectural plan waiting to transform the space in to an early childhood parent education complex. We have space at Webster, Sheridan and could merge Heritage HS with another building to transform Tuttle in to an early childhood/parent education center. This requires capital investment first and foremost. We also need to reach out to our early childhood education programs to increase the supply of licensed teachers. I believe this requires a combination of capital planning on our part and advocacy at the state to equitably fund early childhood parent education programs in public schools and get rid of the scholarship “voucher” program that diverts public taxpayer dollars to private education providers.*

11. Minneapolis is home to diverse communities, including many newcomers. MPS plays a large role in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new home city, while retaining strong cultural ties. **How will you use your position on the Board to ensure sufficient support for English Learners? What policy or budget recommendations do you have to support English Learners at the district level?** *We have significantly increased our EL funding over the past few years, both by advocating with AMSD and MSBA for state funding and directing more of our general operating dollars to invest in EL services. We currently spend about \$9 million more than is allocated by the state for EL services. Our Wellstone program successfully supports students who no longer generate state funding. I believe the greatest need we have currently for our immigrant families, beyond academic investments, is to ensure they feel safe and supported, welcomed and valued. I have strongly advocated for DACA and our schools as sanctuaries for our students and families. I believe our local partners in this work of deflecting ICE and the horrific policies of our current federal administration like Navigate are critical.*

**14. Along with attacks on our public schools, our public sector unions are under attack as well. With the upcoming Janus decision at the Supreme Court and attacks on public sector unions, MFT and other locals (SEIU, AFSCME, Teamsters, et al) who represent MPS employees are seeking to ensure our unions have the freedom to assemble and conduct union business. Strong public sector unions help elect pro-public schools state legislators and governor, advocate for good policy, and play a historic role in advocating for racial and social justice. Will you direct the superintendent to honor MPS and organized labor's history of labor peace through ensuring access to sites, employees, and nuts and bolts items like new hire reports and paycheck deduction to ensure healthy labor unions in Minnesota? Yes, *as long as activities do not disrupt student learning or distract or diminish our students' academic experiences.***