



Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO  
 Endorsement and Screening Packet  
 2018 Minneapolis School Board

Name: **Rebecca Gagnon**

**Minneapolis Public Schools At-large**

Office Sought: **School Board Candidate, Incumbent**

About the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

The Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation (MRLF) is the umbrella organization of the 7-county West Metro local unions and includes 175 different unions. **We serve Anoka, Carver, Hennepin, McLeod, Meeker, Scott, and Wright Counties.**

**Our membership is diverse.** We come from all backgrounds: construction workers, educators, government employees, nurses, public safety professionals, healthcare providers, custodial workers, food service workers, and many more.

**Our Mission:**

**To organize in the community for social and economic justice for all working people.**

Our office is located in Minneapolis, **but you also can find us in the suburbs** with our regional advisory councils. These Councils are made up of union members who are local residents who know the communities we work in and who are best positioned to address the issues affecting those communities.

All of the work we carry out is in partnership with, or on behalf, of our unions. Together we:

- ◆ Run a robust year-round political and legislative program
- ◆ Serve our affiliates during contract campaigns and organizing drives
- ◆ Move local policy initiatives across our region
- ◆ Mobilize union members for events and activities
- ◆ Educate, train and provide leadership development for union members
- ◆ Work in our communities to create long-lasting partnerships with non-union groups

We publish a monthly newspaper, *The Minneapolis Labor Review* to keep our members and the community up-to-date and educated on the issues. Additionally, we operate a non-profit, Working Partnerships. Working Partnerships is the community service arm of the MRLF. Our non-profit supports union members in times of need, educates union members on important issues and coordinates service activities in our communities.

Non union members can join our community affiliate, Working America to be a part of the Labor movement.

For more information please visit [www.minneapolisunions.org](http://www.minneapolisunions.org) and follow us on Facebook!

Name:	<b>Rebecca Gagnon</b>
Office Sought:	<b>Minneapolis Public Schools At-large School Board Candidate, Incumbent</b>
Address:	<b>3940 Pillsbury Ave S</b>
City, State, Zip:	<b>Minneapolis, MN 55409</b>
Email Address:	<b>Rgagnon247@gmail.com</b>
Cell Phone:	<b>612-865-9465</b>

Have you received MRLF (AFL-CIO) endorsement in the past?    Yes                    x No

Are you or were you a member of a union? Yes    x No

If yes, which union: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: [www.RebeccaforMN.com](http://www.RebeccaforMN.com)

Committee Name: **Rebecca Gagnon**

Committee Address: **3940 Pillsbury Ave S**

City, State, Zip: **Minneapolis MN. 55409**

Campaign Manager: **myself**

Camp. Manager Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Camp. Manager Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Political Party: **DFL**

Part I: Labor Principles & Collective Bargaining Rights

1) I will publicly support the right of working people to make a free choice to form a union and bargain collectively, in an environment free of interference, coercion, harassment, reprisals or delay.

xYes            No

2) I will urge employers to: respect employees' right to form a union; recognize a union voluntarily when the majority of the employees choose to form one; and bargain in good faith to reach an agreement with the union that represents the employee. And in the case of public employees working in this county, I will support the aforementioned principles.

xYes            No

3) I will publicly oppose any "Right to Work" policies, whether they are at the local, state or national level.

xYes            No

4) Workers should have a fair chance to improve their economic well-being, and to have a job with dignity, livable wages, and health care benefits.

xYes            No

5) Economic growth and development should create prosperity for all, not a few.

Yes      No

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6) Our neighborhoods should be safe and livable for all residents.

Yes      No

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**“Right-to-Work”**: Legislation that makes union security clauses illegal. Effectively, “Right-to-Work” makes union dues optional in unionized workplaces, but still *requires* the union to continue to represent all the workers, regardless of whether or not those workers pay dues. “Right-to-Work” is intended purely to weaken unions. In Minnesota, a “Right-to-Work” Constitutional Amendment was proposed at the State Legislature in 2012, but a broad coalition of faith, labor and community organizations stopped the legislation. The local labor movement is expecting a Supreme Court decision in June of 2018 that will make all public sector unions “Right-to-Work”.

## Part II: Principles and Vision

### 1) **What is your vision for your school district?**

First ~ Continue to invest in our school programs. We must attract and retain students, strengthen schools with a full service community school model which will also increase buy in from the community, grow our market share, and work with our comprehensive district wide assessment on ways we can improve pathways, programs, transportation, and efficiencies. Second, continue to support our lobbying efforts to increase funding and end “cross subsidies” for mandated programs like special education and ELL. Our MN Constitution requires the state to provide an “adequate” public K-12 education for all young Minnesotans. The debate has been about the definition of “adequate.” First I believe we must agree that “adequate” requires that we tie the basic education formula annually to inflationary increases in order to keep up with the increase cost of doing business. Second, the state legislature has clearly laid out their expectations of MN public school districts in legislation, in particular the World’s Best Workforce. I will advocate that “adequate” funding is aligned to World’s Best Workforce legislative requirements. I will also work towards fully funding educational services like special ed and ELL and other state mandates that chip away at our general per pupil allocation leaving our students with inadequate funding to provide much needed basic foundational programming like arts, counselors, bell to bell nurses, ESPs, and managing class size. In order to achieve stability and growth, I will continue to advocate to make choice and our charter school laws more equitable.

### 2) **What is the role of the district in providing for good, living wage jobs and economic opportunities?**

Our general operating budget is 82.5% salaries and benefits. We are an industry that relies upon the quality, commitment and partnership of our employees to ensure the best educational experience for our students. We must not only negotiate in good faith, but fulfill our commitment as an employer to support our employees and provide a strong work culture that values and listens to our employees. Everyone who works for MPS is contributing to the academic achievement of our students, and I know we could not achieve our goals without bus drivers, food service employees, nurses, engineers, teachers and support staff. We also have to work together to address the irresponsible underfunding of public education, fight against the privatization of public services, and

advocate for fully funded state and federal mandates. Otherwise, as a human intensive industry, it is difficult to truly address the needs of our employees and provide the COLA, health and pension benefits, and salary increases they deserve, as well as the class sizes and support staff that our school communities and students need.

**3) How do you see Labor unions improving the lives of working families in your community? What specifically could we collaborate on in your District?**

The rights secured by labor unions support all workers, union and otherwise. It is imperative that we protect the rights of labor unions to organize, bargain, and protections in place, like prevailing wage and project labor agreements. We can work together to champion legislation that supports our workers' rights, including a livable wage, earned safe and sick time, quality affordable health care, and paid family and medical leave. I will also fight with you against any legislative changes that chip away at the dignity, safety, and security of our workers. This includes pre-emption to local control because grassroots, community led initiatives are often the impetus for change at the state and national level.

4) The anti-union playbook has become increasingly complex and effective in chipping away at worker power and making collective bargaining more challenging—particularly impacting workers of color. We have seen a troubling and persistent growth in disparities between people of color compared to whites in Minnesota across all quality of life indicators, including education, employment, housing, and income since the end of the great recession. Many of the fastest growing industries are predominantly low-wage, sub-contracted, and non-union. Women and people of color are more likely to work in these jobs. **What are some of your ideas to make our schools more equitable? What organizations or individuals are you in relationship with to help address the issues of racial disparities?** I have worked for the past eight years to increase equitable access to educational opportunities for students. I was on the committee that saved North High. I advocated to reopen Follwell, move our TAPP program to Longfellow where our young women juggling motherhood and high school can be successful. I pushed for Franklin to reopen as a feeder middle school to North. I also pushed for expansions at our overcrowded schools, including Keewaydin, Loring, SWHS, Washburn, LHCS, Sanford, Seward, and Pratt. We have rigorous college & career pathway programs throughout MPS and differentiated funding to meet the needs of the students. As an at-large school board member finishing my second term, I work with the community throughout Minneapolis to inform my decisions and ensure I understand the differentiated needs of our diverse student body. I have numerous teachers, engineers, esp's and other employee partners in this work, as well as our citywide student government, retired employees, and community members that are strong advocates of their Alma maters. I served on the exec committee and chair of AMSD, the association of Metropolitan School Districts, as well as the Mpls/St. Paul rep for MSDLAF, the MN School District Liquid Asset Fund. I was appointed and re-appointed by the US Secretary of Education to the National Assessment Governing Board where I represent school boards for the nation. All of these partners and experiences provide data and insight that inform my work. I also partner with other elected bodies, the city, county, parks, and state, because it takes all of us to address the various needs of our students. Housing, safety, transportation, health disparities and food inequities all impact our students ability to learn and achieve. I have very strong relationships with Mayor Frey and Senator Hayden, Representative Hornstein, Council Member Warsame, and Park Board members AK Hassan and Kale Severson, all who have endorsed my campaign.

### Part III: Policy



**Prevailing wage** requirements ensure that public investment in development results in high-quality workmanship and contributes to the economic well-being of the community by investing in its workforce. When requirements are in place to ensure that publicly-funded construction pays prevailing wage, low-road contractors cannot underbid their competitors by paying lower wages or failing to offer benefits. Instead, prevailing wage requirements establish labor costs as a constant, ensuring that the

selection of contractors for public construction projects is based on quality and efficiency. <http://www.forworkingfamilies.org/page/policy-tools-prevailing-wage-requirements>

**A Project Labor Agreement** is a construction labor agreement between an owner and a regional building trades council regarding a specific construction project. The agreement sets terms and conditions for all construction employees on the project, spelling out wages, benefits, and working conditions such as working hours and overtime. PLAs protect against work stoppages, as they include no-strike-no-lockout clauses (which prevent a union from striking and the employer from locking out workers). PLAs do not require that union contractors be hired for the project, but that all contractors working on the project abide by the terms of the PLA.



**Building trades unions** are committed to working with District officials to ensure that jobs are done with high quality work and done right the first time. This is to the benefit of the workers and the vitality of the local economy.

**1) Can we count on your continued support for prevailing wage and project labor agreements in the District?**

Yes       No



**Full Service Community Schools (FSCS)** are a strategy for organizing the resources of the community around success. FSCS are NOT an issue, an initiative, prescribed or top-down management fixes. Full Service Community Schools transform schools into vital hubs that benefit students, their families and the surrounding community. They are open before schools, after school and on the weekends. They are for pre-k, school age students and adult learning. FSCS have three main components. 1) A strong core instructional program designed to help all students meet high academic support. 2) Expand learning opportunities designed to enrich the learning

environment for students and their families. And, 3) A full range of health, mental health and social services designed to promote children’s well-being and remove barriers to learning (often referred to as “wrap-around services”). Successful Full Service Community Schools require leadership from community members, elected officials, parents, students and educators to *coordinate* services from all areas of the community.

**2) Are you willing and prepared to find ways Minneapolis Public Schools can embrace the full-service community school model?**

Yes       No

**3) Will you support an official district position regarding the state of Minnesota allowing all drivers to obtain a state-issued driver's license regardless of immigration status?** This will include expressing the District’s support in writing and possibly testifying in Committee given that the large immigrant population in the district.

Yes       No

**4) How do you plan to address declining enrollment?**

We are not asking families why they are leaving, reaching out via phone and email. I am committed to knocking on doors with fellow Board members and staff to reach out and let people know we want them in our schools and address their questions and concerns face to face. We also must tell our story better and push out the incredible programming, opportunities and student achievements happening in Minneapolis Public Schools. One of my strengths, and the reason that a PAC, Progressive Education Fund “against Rebecca Gagnon,” was created in 2014 by ed reformers, is advocating loudly against privatization of public education. We must be vigilant against inequitable charter laws, segregation, vouchers, right to work legislation, and our current system of choice that sets MPS up to fail.

**5) What working family issues or Labor issues would you like to learn more about?**

I’d like to understand how to partner to better communicate the advantages of joining a labor union and the work happening to expose and address issues of fear and intimidation against our immigrant workers. What efforts are happening to reach out and educate workers on their rights and strictly enforce against wage theft. Prevailing wage is critical to ensuring our workers are paid fairly, but it is critical that we also support and enforce a system that prevents and punishes wage theft. Is there a thorough vetting of contractors and compliance monitoring so that we can document violations. Our system of reporting must be transparent and accessible to ensure we hire responsible companies who do not violate workers’ rights and “scheme” the system with unethical subcontracting practices. There must be penalties along with restitution to workers. These are the parents of our students in MPS, and if our families and communities do better, our students and schools do better.

Part IV: Campaign

1) Do you have a campaign plan? Yes

2) How much money have you raised to date? I have not been focused on fundraising because I just entered the At-large race as the incumbent candidate a few weeks ago.

3) How much additional money do you plan to raise to fund your campaign? \$35,000

4) What steps have you taken to bring together a coalition of volunteers and supporters to help you reach your campaign goals? I have a tremendous network of volunteers and supporters across the city. I am a strong grassroots campaigner and organizer and have won two city wide campaigns against great odds through door knocking, phone banking, showing up and being responsive, transparent, informed and engaged with all stakeholders.