

# MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



**Cheryl Youakim**  
Running for MN  
House District 46B



This questionnaire is for educational purposes only. MNSCC does not endorse any specific candidate for the Minnesota House or Senate.

she/her/hers | <http://www.cherylyouakim.com>

## Public Safety Issues

Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play? Why or why not?	Yes, I have lived in Hopkins since 1996, served on city council and worked hard to make sure Hopkins is a safe and healthy community and that all are welcome. St Louis Park has also done an amazing job at building a culturally responsive city.
What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?	Feeling like you are valued in your community no matter who you are, where you come from or what you look like. That it is a place that you would be proud to live, work, and raise your family.
What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?	Our communities (Hopkins & St Louis Park) have been having active conversations are equality and race for the last five years. The focus is on getting to know each other and building

<p>How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	<p>relationships. Our city staff/departments have had culturally responsive training and have been working hard on making sure our city is a welcoming environment. That being said, we still have work to do. I know that some of our community members still do not feel welcome or fairly treated.</p>
--	---

<p>What changes do you think would help prevent violence and other undesirable behavior in your district? How will you go about making those changes?</p>	<p>Making those community connections, providing educational opportunities, and working to make sure both Hopkins &amp; St Louis Park staff/departments have the right training,</p>
---	--

**Police Issues**

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>I want to make sure that all of our city staff, including our police and fire, receive the training and resources to be responsive to all of our citizens. All of our community members should feel like they are welcome and treated fairly.</p>
--	--

<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Investment in community policing, culturally responsive training, non-violence prevention training, mental health training, and training around autism and Alzheimer's.</p>
---	--

<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>In Hopkins, they have shifted our wellness checks over to a duty crew of trained paramedics instead of the police. In St. Louis Park, they have public service officers that handle non-emergency calls. We need to look at ways that we can shift some of the calls that do not require an armed officer to others who are more properly trained.</p>
---	---

<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I supported the entire police accountability and reform package of the POCI caucus. I support felon re-enfranchisement as well as limiting the length of probationary sentences. And am open to many of the issues on your platform.</p>
--	---

**Criminal Court Issues**

<p>Do you notice any inequities in the courts in your district? What do you see as the driving force in those inequities? How can we count on you to respond to any inequities?</p>	<p>Access to the courts because of social economic issues is huge. Looking at housing court in particular and the ability to wipe an eviction from your record. Access to remove things from your driving record. Access to a proper defense. Inequitable sentences across our different counties. Better access to diversion programs. All of those issues, and many more need to be addressed.</p>
---	--

<p>Diving into topics like bail, services for crime survivors, court fines and fees, special prosecutors, and sentencing and probation guidelines can illustrate how public policy has immense and diverse impacts on Minnesotans.</p> <p>Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>Looking at the length of probationary sentences. Lowering fines for minor offenses. Investing more in our mental health courts and veterans courts.</p>
---	--

**Incarceration Issues**

<p>In your opinion, what is the purpose of incarceration? Do you believe that incarceration accomplishes those purposes well? If not, why not, and what would you do about it?</p>	<p>Incarceration without a focus on rehabilitation does not work. We also need to have more resource for folks once they leave the prison system.</p>
<p>What do you know about alternatives to incarceration and how they address violence and other undesirable or criminalized behavior? What incarceration alternatives do you support and why?</p>	<p>I know a little bit about stays of adjudication, diversion programs, and the work our specialty courts do. I am supportive of all of those programs.</p>
<p>* Every district in Minnesota is home to people who have experienced incarceration. How do you think issues like access to health care, visits/phone calls/emails, education, and other programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?</p>	<p>Access to all of those programs, while incarcerated can make a huge difference for when folks are released. So does treatment for addiction while in prison.</p>
<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they are incarcerated, or should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they had their last residential address?</p>	<p>That is a tough one, I can see the reason for both. If they are still connected, thru family, or know where they will be moving after their stay is over may be a better way to have them counted.</p>

Or something else? Why?	
Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?	Of have listed many of the issues that I care about above and would support bills to make those changes or invest in certain programs.

**Reentry Issues**

* People return from incarceration to every district in Minnesota. How do you think issues like access to housing, employment, health care, recovery resources, mental health supports, basic needs, and voting or civic engagement affect your constituents?	While our current system does an adequate job on rehabilitation while incarcerated, it does a poor job on access to housing and jobs after release. We need to work toward removing the barriers to housing, especially for those convicted of felonies that have done their time. I was a supporter of ban the box as well. We should also be able to find a way to encourage employers to offer job placements for those who are newly released.
What, if any, changes would you make to re-entry policies? And what investments, if any, would you make to re-entry supports in your district? Why?	I think that investment in housing would make the biggest difference. Too many folks face insurmountable barriers when they leave prison and try and to find housing. That is where I would start.

**Public Health Issues**

What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?	I was happy to see that some of our jails have done a good job releasing low level offenders. But I would like to make sure there are more safety protocols in our prisons. We need to make sure that those working in our prisons have the PPE to keep those staying in our systems safe.
* What, if any, public health crises do you think have inequitable impacts on people who are involved in the criminal legal system, and how can we count on you to respond to these public health crises?	For my part, as the Education Policy Chair, I will be looking at what we can do to support the children of those who are involved in the criminal legal system. We need to make sure the children have the support in school to continue to learn so they have a chance to succeed. I am thinking of the higher adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) some of the children of those incarcerated have faced. I would also like to make sure incarcerated parents have the ability to build and maintain the relationships with their children as well.

**Personal Connections**

<p>* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal court, incarceration, and/or re-entry? What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?</p>	<p>I feel that I have some knowledge base because of the time I spent working as Senator Ron Latz's LA and CA for the Senate Judiciary Committee.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>I will continue to educate folks on the issues. It has been very helpful when folks involved with the Second Chance Coalition come to our Town Halls and speak out as well.</p>