

# MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



**Doria Drost**  
Running for MN  
House District 16A



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she/her/hers | [doriadrostforhouse.com](http://doriadrostforhouse.com)

## Public Safety Issues

Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play?  
Why or why not?

In the current environment, the communities in my district do not feel safe. Our rural district has recently seen a major spike in acts of hatred and racism including individuals sporting swastika flags as masks in Walmart and individual driving their vehicle through our community memorial for George Floyd. We've also previously had issues of LGBTQ+ inclusivity in our public schools when multiple community members spoke out against displaying a pride flag in the middle school. This environment is unhealthy for our youth and our marginalized communities and we must do better.

<p>What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you?          What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>Public safety, to me, means have the resources and capability to actively protect all individuals in the community. This is intersectional with our healthcare, education, and infrastructure systems in addition to law enforcement and community-based organizations. Having emotional awareness and cultural competence as well as an attitude of acceptance builds safety as well as active investments in the foundation of these norms, including training opportunities and community education. When we have outlash of blatantly exclusionary actions that immediately lowers the feeling of safety for the public. Attempts to cut these community resources is also problematic.</p>
<p>What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?          How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	<p>There is a stark contrast of opinions in my district surrounding public safety. On one side, we have those standing with recent events saying Black Lives Matter and actively working to create systemic change, but we also have others that argue against these changes in order to remain in the current ‘comfort zone’ we’ve seen. From the conversations I’ve had with constituents, to improve public safety, we must reform training for our law enforcement and improve our community resources and events centered around safety and inclusivity of all- especially as we begin these new dialogues surrounding recent events in 16A.</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>Violence can be deterred by taking progressive action to improve our prevention strategies. Creating investments for mental health, training on trauma and cultural competency for all law enforcement and healthcare officials, and educating our community starting with the youth in the K-12 system is critical in improving from where we are currently. I’d like to enact policy changes that create expansion into rural areas for healthcare resources and improvements upon mental health in public schools, along with reforming training for officers, and allocating funding towards community organizations that can alleviate some of that pressure off of officers.</p>
<p><b>Police Issues</b></p>	
<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>I have had individuals tell me of situations of racial profiling by our local police department, which is especially deflating in our current environment. I’d like to</p>

	see improvements in our local law enforcement so that every individual feels equally protected.
* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.	First and foremost, improvements to training are critical in reforming the actions of our police. Additionally, law enforcement is depended on by the public to be first responders to a wide portfolio of issues, some of which could be better addressed by other community-centered organizations. Allocating a portion of that funding to those additional organizations will help to balance the stressors our officers face in order to improve quality.
* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.	I feel strongly that some funding for police budgets would be better spent lifting up other community organizations that can assist in public safety and health, such as trauma and mental health groups and racial equity organizations.
Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?	The POCI recently championed a bill for police reform and racial equity measures that I fully support. I also support enforcing further body cam regulations of officers and consequences towards officers that have complaints against them in order to promote accountability.

**Criminal Court Issues**

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?	I have not personally viewed inequities in the court system in my district, but I also have not explored that topic area deeply either so there could be disparities in the system that I am unaware of.
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. Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?	In terms of criminal court practices, I strongly support efforts to abolish cash bail as it disproportionately affects those from low-income backgrounds and people of color compared to their counterparts. Justice should not be served only if the price is right.

**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>The purpose of incarceration is to hold potentially dangerous individuals out of public and society until the threat they pose is removed. Right now, I do not feel incarceration serves its purpose well due to the flaws in our system. Our jails and prisons are overcrowded and overwhelmed and a large part of that is due to the status of marijuana criminalization. Many people are incarcerated for low-level drug offenses which would not exist if marijuana was legalized in Minnesota like in other states. I am in favor of legalizing cannabis and expunging records for those currently incarcerated because of it.</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>A major alternative to incarceration is behavioral therapy. Therapy programs can serve communities much more effectively than incarceration as it doesn't simply 'remove the problem' from view, but it puts in active effort to correct and improve upon those individuals so that they can re-enter society as functioning people.</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>The label of incarceration makes it extremely difficult for individuals to have access to an equal quality of life. Because our system is overwhelmed and highly privatized, the quality of education and healthcare these individuals receive is worse than if they were caged animals. We have to remove the privatization from this system in order to improve quality of life so that those incarcerated individuals can receive adequate and quality care and lifestyles as well as expanding use of therapy programs and addiction counseling.</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? Or something else? Why?</p>	<p>Incarcerated individuals are still human beings and they should absolutely be included in District counts where they resided prior to becoming incarcerated as some may be shifted from different facilities that they had never been near previously, nor had interaction with the public community.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>I am in full support of policy reforms to decriminalize cannabis and de-privatize the state criminal justice system, especially in terms of healthcare.</p>

## 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?

It's critical that incarcerated individuals are given access to re-entry into society including housing, healthcare, employment, etc. following their release in order to reduce rates of recidivism. They should also be able to vote as they are people and they deserve the right to influence their democracy. It's important that communities recognize and respond to these needs in order to improve overall quality of life and alleviate the overwhelming rates of those incarcerated returning to the system.

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?

Investments should be made to ease transition of re-entry, particularly in assisting with education for people during incarceration, connecting them with employment opportunities close to their release, and investing in the creation of affordable housing. My district has a significant lack of affordable housing for any person, so it is especially difficult for an individual just re-entering to society to gain any access to housing.

## Public Health Issues

What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?

I am disappointed in the response to the coronavirus. Those in jails and prisons had extremely limited options in response to the virus, and it caused a disproportionate spike in these facilities. More should have been done to protect those individuals and in providing care to those that were infected.

\* 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?

Public health affects everyone. It's important when responding to these crises, that measures and actions are taken to protect all individuals regardless of status. Those involved in the criminal legal system, as this pandemic has proven, are at much higher risk due to the amount of interpersonal interactions. We have to create action plans for these situations as best we can in order to protect those in the system.

## Personal Connections

\* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal

As a survivor of rape and sexual assault, I have witnessed first-hand how policing can fail victims. I cannot imagine how much more escalated this would be for people of

<p>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>color. My personal connections make me much more passionate about pushing for changes to the system so that we can form more equitable law enforcement agencies and public safety measures.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>It's important that as many people get out to vote this election as possible, so spreading the word about my campaign through volunteering or donating is critical. Any ideas and feedback on policy creation is also a valuable asset if elected.</p>