

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



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Public Safety Issues

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

Yes, I generally feel safe in my neighborhood and my city of Minneapolis. I have safe, stable housing, I know my neighbors, and have a supportive community. Living in Minneapolis, that feeling of safety was disrupted during the unrest following the murder of George Floyd. In the week that followed, the city was under curfew, the National Guard was called in, and the Southside and the Northside saw an influx of unusual activity, cars and people coming from outside the community of Minneapolis driving through streets in some cases with weapons and militia insignia. In response, my neighbors, like neighborhoods across the city, organized a neighborhood support network to look out for each other, keep watch over night and provide community safety. It provided a feeling of

	<p>collective safety that came with taking care of each other and looking out for neighbors.</p>
<p>What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>Public safety means that we have systems, cultures and communities where everyone is respected, treated with dignity, cared for and has access to what they need to thrive. It means we have communities and neighborhoods that are inclusive, connected and take care of each other. Access to good jobs, stable and affordable housing, healthcare and mental health services, educational opportunities and clean air and water build community safety. Poverty, violence, systemic racism, economic inequality, and environmental degradation all detract from public safety.</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>As I talk to constituents in Minneapolis and Richfield, there is consensus about the importance of keeping everyone in our community, of every race, background and ability, safe and healthy. There is a general understanding that our current system of policing is not preventing crime or keeping communities safe, and it is hurting our Black, Brown and Indigenous neighbors and failing Minnesotans with disabilities and neighbors struggling with mental illness and homelessness.</p> <p>People in my district talk about the role of good-paying jobs, safe and affordable housing, accessible and affordable healthcare, mental health services, and educational opportunities as critical components to building a safe and healthy community. People also raise concerns about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, the rise in white nationalist violence, and the rise in violent and hateful rhetoric on public safety.</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>To prevent violence of every kind, we need to make sure that we are supporting members of our community, investing in the success of kids, adults and families, focusing on community-led programs that interrupt and prevent conflict and violence -- including police brutality -- and ensure law enforcement is accountable to the community. We need long-term and sustainable solutions like investing in full-service public schools, living wage jobs, youth and young adult job and recreational opportunities, mental health services and safe, long-term affordable housing. And we need to invest in solutions that communities develop and identity work for them. As the state legislature, I will fight for community-driven solutions that prioritize equity and invest in the long term health and success of all our kids, families and communities.</p>
<p>Police Issues</p>	
<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>The police department has lost public trust. While there is a diversity of opinions on the future of policing, I hear often from constituents that they feel MPD has lost trust with the community, that the Minneapolis Police Department, Police</p>

	<p>Officers Federation of Minneapolis President Bob Kroll and the police union are undermining public trust and detracting from public safety and not keeping residents safe and are creating harm in communities of color, specifically with the Black and Indigenous communities. The department seems to embody an adversarial and militaristic culture and approach that is at odds with the duty to protect and serve everyone in the community. This is exacerbated by the fact that Minneapolis has one of the lowest numbers in the country for police residents who live in the city, 92% of officers do not live in the city and do not live in the community they serve.</p>
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>The state should act to pass the remaining police accountability measures introduced by the People of Color and Indigenous Caucus (POCI) including structural changes to increase police accountability, require civilian oversight and invest in alternatives to policing.</p> <p>We need structural changes to ensure the safety of everyone in our community. We must continue to reform the POST Board to ensure communities are represented and it is empowered to provide real accountability and oversight to law enforcement.</p> <p>We must also make updates to use of force directives, have better training protocols, and move the prosecution of law enforcement from county attorneys to the state Attorney's General Office. We need to get the weapons of war off our streets and end law enforcement's ability to acquire military equipment from the federal government through the 1033 program.</p> <p>The state should support community-driven processes in my district and across the state to give residents a chance to reimagine public safety.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Budgets are more than just a set of spending priorities, they are a statement of our values. Over the last 30 years, cities and states have dramatically increased the resources being spent on policing and incarceration; while at the same time cutting investments in social safety net programs, education, housing and infrastructure. These choices have made everyone less safe and devastated Black, Brown and Indigenous low-income communities. This system is expensive, ineffective and, more importantly, isn't keeping people safe -- especially our Black, Brown and Indigenous neighbors.</p> <p>To help my district and state, we need changes to make investments in the things that build public safety. We need to invest in community-based models of safety and violence prevention that actually works to build strong, resilient and equitable communities (including mental health and crisis response), community de-escalation, community health and</p>

	safety such as domestic abuse crisis centers, shelters, and hotlines.
Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?	I support the police and criminal justice accountability legislation introduced by the POCI Caucus and will work to enact the additional structural changes and accountability reforms that the legislature failed to pass in the July 2020 Special Session. Along with the policies referenced in question 6, people in my district were especially disappointed that arbitration reform and repealing the prohibition on residency requirements for police officers was left out of the legislation. We need measures to hold law enforcement officials accountable by passing police arbitration reforms to ensure police officers who have been terminated on violent offenses do not escape 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?	<p>Yes, there are deep racial and economic disparities in the courts in Hennepin county. Our court system reflects and perpetuates the structural racism, discrimination, and implicit bias rooted in the criminal legal system.</p> <p>As a public defender, I saw the impact that over-policing and mass incarceration had on my clients. It leads to increased police interactions with individuals and fuels the pipeline to criminal court, jail and incarceration. Moreover, the over-criminalization due to the war on drugs has been a major factor in the racial inequities in incarceration. This burdens defendants with fines, fees and cash bail that criminalize poverty.</p> <p>We need structural reforms to our criminal code, pre-trial detention and bail system. We also need to ensure every Minnesotan facing criminal charges gets fair representation and a fair trial by increasing funding for public defenders and providing additional support through Civil Legal Services and additional outreach programs with the Department of Human Rights.</p>
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<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>I believe we need to reform criminal court practices to end practices that criminalize poverty, end the racial inequities in our system, ensure defendants get a fair trial, and protect victims. I support legislation ending cash bail and eliminating fines and fees that just make it hard for poor defendants to move forward.</p> <p>The state should support cities and counties in pursuing alternatives to incarceration including diversion and specialty courts like drug and veterans court. I also support probation reform bills that would require the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission to establish a presumptive probation term based on the characteristics of the offense.</p>
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	<p>And we must include and center the voices of formerly incarcerated citizens by restoring their right to vote. As a voting rights lawyer, I've worked to restore the right to vote in Maryland and Florida and I'll be a champion to do it here in Minnesota.</p>
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<p>Incarceration Issues</p>	
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<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>In law school we were taught that incarceration served two purposes. First, to deter future crimes by both the offender and others who may be thinking of committing the same crime. Second, it serves as punishment for violating the community rules as codified in criminal code.</p> <p>I don't think incarceration serves its purpose. The system is far too punitive without being proportionate to the rules and norms that are often violated. Systemic racism and implicit bias lead to racial disparities in sentencing. Moreover, our prison-system is often relied on to deal with people in crisis or folks who otherwise should be supported with non-institutionalized care.</p> <p>Instead, our system should instead be focused on rehabilitation, restitution and restorative justice. We must eliminate racial disparities in sentencing and eliminate the punitive model of incarceration. Instead we should focus on interventions that address the harm caused to victims, reducing recidivism and rehabilitating criminal offenders.</p>
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<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>The United States is less than 5% of the world's population but has 25% of the world's prison population. That number is higher today than it was 30 and 40 years ago, despite the fact that crime is at a historic low. We are long overdue for criminal justice reform and an investment in alternatives to incarceration.</p> <p>Our system of incarceration is expensive, inefficient and hurts our communities. The state should support cities and counties in pursuing alternatives to incarceration including diversion, youth diversion programs, and specialty courts like drug, mental health and veterans courts. We need interventions to meet people where they are at and with the proper support they need to deal with addiction, mental health issues or other circumstances. These programs are shown to create better outcomes for the individuals and also to reduce the fiscal and social costs of incarceration. We should follow Ohio and Illinois in their push to incentivize community-based alternatives to confinement.</p>
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<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,</p>	<p>We need to ensure that Minnesotans who are incarcerated are treated with dignity and have access to quality healthcare, mental health services, education and programming. Access to these resources is key to rehabilitation, and benefits our society when they are released</p>
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<p>education, and other programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?</p>	<p>It is good for families and incarcerated individuals to maintain their connection, and connection to community. To that end, we need to take the profit-making industries out of our jails and prisons and end the exorbitant costs that jails and prisons charge for phone calls. We need to ensure that families can visit their incarcerated loved ones in person with fair and accessible visitor policies.</p> <p>And healthcare is a human right and having medical care, mental health services and proper nutrition must be guaranteed to every incarcerated person. Moreover, we need to ensure individuals have access to exercise, fresh air and are able to pursue personal wellness and health.</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>As I talk to constituents in Minneapolis and Richfield, there is consensus about the importance of keeping everyone in our community, of every race, background and ability, safe and healthy. There are a variety of experiences and opinions about public safety policy and reforms from investing in community policing, creating police accountability, criminal justice reform, addressing unsheltered homelessness, to divesting from policing. There is a general understanding that our current system of policing is not preventing crime or keeping communities safe, and it is hurting our Black, Brown and Indigenous neighbors and failing Minnesotans with disabilities and neighbors struggling with mental illness and homelessness.</p> <p>People in my district talk about the role of good paying jobs, safe and affordable housing, accessible and affordable healthcare, mental health services, and educational opportunities as critical components to building a safe and healthy community. In my district, I hear concerns about the lack</p>
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>In addition to legislation referenced in questions above, I strongly support efforts to end mass incarceration. I support the work of Chair Carlos Mariani and the Minnesota House of Representatives in proposing Criminal Justice Reform and Decriminalizing Poverty, which includes: limiting DWI forfeiture for ignition interlock participants; establishing grants for juvenile detention alternatives; license reinstatement diversion program; more grant funds for youth intervention; authorizing sealing criminal records after a pardon; extending post-conviction relief petition deadlines; reforming civil forfeiture procedures; amending life without parole for juveniles; and limiting the use of shackles on juveniles while in custody. And I'd start by centering the voices of formerly incarcerated citizens by restoring the right to vote of Minnesotans on probation and parole.</p>

Reentry Issues

<p>* 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?</p>	<p>A criminal conviction, and even a criminal charge, makes it more difficult for people to access basic needs to sustain themselves and their families. All too often, this lack of support can cause individuals to struggle and may result in recidivism.</p> <p>As a pro bono lawyer working with clients trying to get their records expunged, I know how important it is that we pass more robust policies to prevent landlords, employers, and creditors from holding a criminal charge or conviction against people. We also need to invest in supportive services, counseling, mental and physical healthcare to support people returning from incarceration.</p> <p>Research shows that returning citizens who are engaged in their community have better outcomes and are less likely to reoffend. It is critically important that we have the voices of formerly incarcerated people in the conversation about how we reform and reimagine our criminal legal system. I'll be a champion to restore the right to vote for Minnesotans on probation and parole.</p>
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<p>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?</p>	<p>I believe we need to invest upstream to keep people out of jail and prison by investing in the services and support people need and keeping people out of our criminal legal system and incarceration in the first place.</p> <p>For folks coming out of incarceration, we should proactively invest in providing the support, counseling, housing and employment resources that meet people where they are at. Specifically affordable housing, occupational training and assistance, access to mental health support, and peer-support. And as we consider further policies, I believe we need to center the voices and experiences of those returning citizens and will prioritize the support and investments that they identify needing to succeed after incarceration.</p>
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Public Health Issues

<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>The Coronavirus pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on incarcerated individuals as social distance measures, PPE and other mitigation reforms are largely unavailable in prisons to limit its spread. Moreover, the racial disparities of our criminal legal system are compounded by the disparities of the virus, as data confirms that Black, Latinx and Indigenous people are more likely to be hospitalized and to die from the virus because of underlying health disparities.</p> <p>In Minnesota, as of August, approximately 522 incarcerated individuals have tested positive for the virus but testing and treatment have been inconsistent. Our state was right to waive copays for medical attention and fees for personal hygiene</p>
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	<p>supplies, but we must do more. We need to go farther to grant medical release for inmates who've tested positive for coronavirus or who've been exposed to people that tested positive and ensure they have appropriate medical care and lodging to recover and quarantine in.</p>
<p>* 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?</p>	<p>Racism is a public health crisis in Minnesota and I support the Minnesota House resolution offered by Rep. Ruth Richardson declaring that for the state of Minnesota. Racism increases the changes that people of color will end up in the criminal legal system, provides worse outcomes and increases the barriers for people returning from incarceration.</p> <p>Beyond the pandemic, other health crises have persevered in the criminal legal system since its inception. As the prison population ages, so do the rates of diabetes and heart disease. Hepatitis C is spread at drastic rates among incarcerated individuals and results in permanent damage to the liver and oftentimes, death. Younger folks often suffer from addiction and the subsequent mental and physical health effects. All too often, individuals don't have access to the care they need. We must work to expand access and affordability for rehabilitation and basic health care services.</p>

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>While I don't have any immediate family that have been incarcerated, my experience as a public defender gave me a personal connection to the negative impact that our system has on people, their families, communities and our society as a whole. I had clients who lost their jobs because they were sitting in jail and couldn't make bail after being picked up for a misdemeanor. I represented teenagers of color who were picked up from over-policed neighborhoods on charges that criminalized behavior in Black and Indigenous communities. I saw how little teenagers in richer, whiter neighborhoods would be brought in for the same behavior.</p> <p>My experience representing indigent clients in criminal court exposed me to the deep need for structural reform. This reform needs to hear from the experiences, knowledge and voices of people who have been hurt by the system. We need to restore the right to vote for Minnesotans returning from incarceration to ensure they have a voice and a vote in how we reimagine the system.</p>
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<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>People in my district -- and across Minnesota -- can support criminal justice and police accountability reform by speaking up and voicing their support for the reforms our community is calling for, and encouraging others to do the same. At the state level, they can start by calling for the state legislature to pass the</p>
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remaining POCI caucus police and criminal justice reforms.

They can also support changes by listening to and amplifying the voices of Minnesotans returning from incarceration and by fighting to restore the right to vote for Minnesotans on probation and parole.