

# MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



**Erin Murphy**  
**Running for MN**  
**Senate District 64**

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she/her/hers | [murphyfor64.com](http://murphyfor64.com)

## Public Safety Issues

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

Yes, I feel safe in my communities. I feel safe because I live in a connected and supportive community.

My sense of economic security contributes to my feelings of safety. I have, at times in my life, felt threatened as a woman in spaces alone. I don't feel that threat anymore but am sometimes reminded of it.

What does the phrase "public safety" mean to you?  
What builds safety? What detracts from it?

To me, public safety is experienced when communities are connected and supportive. It is present when communities center authentic relationships. Public safety means that we have invested in the infrastructure that supports the people in our communities - our healthcare, our education system, our social services.

	Alienation and the perpetuation of racism or otherness is what detracts from safety.
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?	As someone who lives here and who has represented the district in the past, I haven't frequently heard about a lack of public safety with the exception of property theft and campus sexual assault. But that is not the experience for all people.  It is time for a call to action on issues of public safety and to work to create safe communities for all of us.
What changes do you think would help prevent violence and other undesirable behavior in your district? How will you go about making those changes?	Violence decreases when community members are supported. In order to support our neighbors we invest in people, and directly invest in our communities. We must invest money in intervention and prevention programs such as the Rondo Community Ambassadors, Healing Streets, expanding library and community center hours, and investing in afterschool programming. We must also invest in structures such as public schools, increase the minimum wage, and ensure healthcare for all. To decrease violence we must build connections with our neighbors and work to support each other.

**Police Issues**

What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?	I don't have a deep relationship with the police. I do believe that Saint Paul, like many metropolitan agencies, has become too militarized in the way that they are equipped and the way they interact with the public.
* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.	We must end police militarization. I support banning tear gas as a crowd control agent, and preventing Minnesota law enforcement from participating in the 1033 Military Surplus program. Plus, we must review and reform the Use of Force policies.  With my background as a nurse, I think about how both nursing and policing are professions where you hold people's lives and safety in your hands. Unions have a duty to represent its members and nurses have a professional obligation to remove nurses from practice if they are harming patients. I don't see that commitment from police. Permitting a process that makes it impossible to remove a nurse who injured patients is wrong, it harms Minnesotans. The same can be said for law enforcement.  We need to legislate changes to police arbitration laws. And, we must be crystal clear about why, and about protecting working people in public sector unions. Republicans want to use arbitration reform to attack working people, we have to hold that line.

<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I believe in investing in our communities and in people. Law enforcement has work on their plate that should be the responsibility of social workers, housing programs, treatment programs - we call the police for too many things. We should take those things off their plates and out of their budget. We need to make sure that when someone calls for help, the help that comes to them matches their needs.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I would have supported the reform bill introduced by the BIPOC Caucus this summer. I would also support legislation that would achieve the reforms I talked about in the question above.</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>People of color overwhelmingly are over-policed, are over-represented in the prison system, and bear harsher punishments for similar crimes of their white counterparts. The structural reasons for that boil down to racism, the failed War on Drugs policy, and the criminalization of poverty.</p> <p>I believe, fundamentally, that we must work for a justice system that delivers justice for all, that is less adversarial, and more restorative.</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. Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I've been encouraged to see the work around using restorative justice practices in drug and treatment courts. I want to see it expanded.</p> <p>I would like to explore the alignment of the "youth" definition for the court system and social service programs - "up to" 25 years. We need to prevent teenagers from being tried as adults and to use alternative means of restorative justice for young people entering the court system.</p> <p>Cash bail must be ended, but the structure needs to be shifted so that people are not held indefinitely until trial. Pre-trial detention is already an injustice.</p> <p>During my career, I have fought hard for survivors of sexual assault &amp; harassment - I want to see our court and prosecutorial system treat those crimes as the priority they should be, and to treat survivors with the dignity and respect that they deserve.</p>
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**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>I view incarceration in terms of rehabilitation and redemption. Incarcerated people should have access to health care, mental health &amp; addiction services, education and training programs. The purpose of incarceration should not be purely to punish or castigate. When people are released, they should be prepared to live free. Too often, this is not the case.</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 support Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiatives; rules to prohibit correctional commitments for youth not involved in serious or chronic offending; changing the financing of state &amp; local juvenile corrections systems to adequately fund community based non residential supervision; and reducing length of stay in residential or correctional facilities in line with best practice research.</p> <p>We must invest in alternatives to incarceration. We need a continuum of high quality alternatives that supervise, sanction and support people effectively in their homes and communities. This is what will improve public safety.</p> <p>To reduce reliance on confinement we must change how systems operate. Improved diversion practices, probation supervision &amp; detention reforms (like those in JDAI sites) are all necessary. All current policies that stand in the way of these reforms must be changed. Ohio and Illinois have successfully pioneered approaches that incentivize community based alternatives to confinement.</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>If we want people to be ready to succeed when they end their time incarcerated, they must be treated with dignity during their time. Healthcare is a human right. Incarcerated people must have access to healthcare that meets their needs.</p> <p>We know that the ability to freely communicate with your support network helps ease re-entry and dramatically reduces recidivism. There are too many instances of private companies gouging incarcerated people to access books, emails, and letters - these practices must end. Incarcerated people are not a profit source.</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>They should be counted at their home addresses.</p>

Or something else? Why?	
Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?	I will support legislation to end prison gerrymandering. A priority for me will be to tackle incarceration related disenfranchisement. While allowing felons currently incarcerated to vote would take a constitutional remedy, we can make sure that voting for those convicted of a misdemeanor is a right in reality, rather than in principle. We must also pass legislation to ensure that every person has their right to vote restored the day they are released, and end probation as a barrier to democratic participation.

### 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?	All of these issues are fundamental to a full life for every person, including those returning from incarceration. Politics of scarcity have their greatest impact on those who have the least safety net, on those most marginalized.
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?	We must restore full voting rights, automatically, to those on parole or probation. As Majority Leader in 2013, I worked to pass Ban the Box legislation, and I would support further efforts to eliminate discrimination in housing and employment against formerly incarcerated people.

### Public Health Issues

What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?	Confinement poses additional risks to health during this pandemic. Correctional facilities must abide by the same standards as other government departments and guarantee distancing & masking. I don't think that the Department has been clearly communicating about what additional precautions they have taken.
* 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?	The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of these existing inequities built into our current system. I believe that we should be seeking to decrease interactions with the system - for example, by replacing failed War on Drugs policies with a rehabilitative approach. We should legalize marijuana and expunge the records of those convicted. We should strengthen and expand immunity laws that prevent those who seek help in case of an overdose or sexual assault from being charged with

	<p>drug offenses.</p> <p>I also support harm reduction policies, such as safe injection sites, naloxone distribution centers, and removing testing equipment from drug paraphernalia lists.</p>
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**Personal Connections**

<p>* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal court, incarceration, and/or re-entry?</p> <p>What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?</p>	<p>I came to politics and to organizing through nursing, which means I came to politics through care for people. That care is centered in my values, and my policies. Politics is about improving people’s lives.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you’ve outlined here?</p>	<p>We must use our powerful voices to organize and engage Minnesotans with purpose and with joy. That’s how we strengthen our democracy and make change.</p>