

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



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Running for MN
House District 46A



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Public Safety Issues

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

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities. It is important that I know that I can live, work, and play in communities that keep me and my family safe. With few exceptions, I feel safe in my community. But I also understand that my feeling of safety also correlates with the color of my skin. I generally don't feel scared or threatened at traffic stops. I generally don't fear law enforcement officers if they visit me or my home. For many Minnesotans, that is not the case. We need to ensure that we are building a state where every Minnesotan can feel safe in their community.

What does the phrase "public safety" mean to you?

I think safety is something that is relational. Safety is not something that one imposes on another. If the extent of safety is the level of a set of entities policing laws, then it is as much

<p>What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>about power and control as it is about safety. Strengthening relationships and building the capacity of communities are essential elements of public safety. In building safer communities, policing cannot be the only tool we have for public safety. In building public safety, we must ensure that we fully fund supportive services for residents, ensure there are equitable education opportunities, and pathways to starting to build income and wealth like supporting first time homebuyers. We also need to ensure that those enforcing the laws have thorough training, robust oversight, and have a scope of work that is right sized. Policing, as we know it today, is not a cure all and we should not put them in that position or give them that authority.</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>In general, people in my district are deeply concerned about racial inequality in our justice system, but have confidence in their local police departments. De-escalation and mental health resources responded to crisis are among the police priorities for people in my district.</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>In building safer communities, policing cannot be the only tool we have for public safety. In building public safety, we must ensure that we fully fund supportive services for residents, ensure there are equitable education opportunities, and pathways to starting to build income and wealth like supporting first time homebuyers.</p>

Police Issues

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>Many police enter the profession of policing wanting to serve their community. Many police officers are serving their communities well, and taking steps to continue to improve their skills and respond to needed updates in policing. Yet, the culture of some police departments or the lack of training or incorrect training for some has led to police departments that fuel chaos rather than be a partner in public safety. For instance, the use of ketamine to subdue people is out of control. Rather than working to de-escalate a situation they have increased their use to ketamine to subdue people. Using ketamine for law enforcements purposes changes the culture of policing and those being policies.</p>
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I support the POCI proposed package of police reforms - many of those provisions passed in the July special session of 2020. However, that was just a start. We need to continue to ensure that the use of force requirements in Minnesota law are based on preserving life. That is why banning most chokeholds was</p>

	<p>necessary but we still need to do more. We need to expand the use of body cameras, and mandate their use 100% of the time, reform the use of ketamine as a tool of law enforcement, provide better training and education requirements, and ensure that there is proper oversight and supervision of law enforcement officers. We need to overhaul the Peace Officer Standards and Training board so it provides oversight and takes swift action to correct issues in policing. That is not currently happening. But so much more needs to get done to correct over policing including re-imagining our democracy by restoring the vote to those who have done their time in prison, reform laws that have disproportionately target</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>The scope of work that the police are being asked to accomplish needs to be modified. For example: police officers have demonstrated repeatedly that they are not suited to handle mental health calls, especially if the individual in crisis is a person of color. Removing such calls from the purview of the police and reallocating resources to appropriately trained staff is a reform that is long overdue.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>The police reform package passed by the MN House in 2020 (and which went farther than the version that was ultimately agreed to by the MN Senate) represents a solid start. I believe we can go much farther in terms of using the POST Board as a tool to regulate the behavior of police. While progress was made with regards to arbitration in the bill passed this summer, I would champion legislation that removed arbitration as an option in any case that involved police brutality. As mentioned in a previous answer, we also need to continue to ensure that the use of force requirements in Minnesota law is appropriate - the banning of chokeholds was only the first step. We need to expand the use of body cameras in our state, reform the use of ketamine as a tool of law enforcement, provide better training and education requirements, and ensure that there is proper oversight and supervision of law enforcement officers.</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>Courts produce results largely based on what comes into the courtroom, so that if police are arresting and prosecutors are charging people disproportionately based on race, sentencing, bail, and other judicial decisions will reflect the system's bias. We need to change the criminal justice system at all levels in order to create equality under the law.</p>
<p>Diving into topics like bail, services for crime survivors, court fines and fees, special</p>	<p>I would support legislation that ends cash bail and reforms the use of fines and fees. I believe strongly that some form of special prosecutor should be utilized in cases involving police</p>

<p>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>misconduct so as to avoid the conflict of interest that arises when a County Attorney is asked to prosecute members of the police force with which they maintain a professional relationship.</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>The purpose of incarceration is to reform a person and keep them from continuing to commit crimes in the future, and for the community as a whole to see that justice is served for crime victims. Incarceration should be proportional to the acts committed, and should not be used as a deterrent because doing so is ineffective and leads to expanded incarceration that accomplishes nothing.</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>I support alternatives to incarceration that encourage a restorative justice approach and communal healing process. These approaches allow for both parties- the victim and the perpetrator/aggressor to decide how to remedy the harm that was done on their own terms. Restorative justice can be a powerful and transformational alternative to incarceration for not only the parties involved in the harm but the community at large also benefits.</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, education, and other programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?</p>	<p>Incarcerated individuals are humans and deserve to be treated with dignity. Incarcerated individuals should be able to live a healthy life even though they are incarcerated. That means that we should ensure those individuals can keep in touch with those that they care about and those that care for them. One policy I was the chief author of was the effort to ban private prisons in Minnesota. First off, no one should make money from the incarceration of anyone. It creates perverse incentives and is harmful to families and those incarcerated. For instance, a private prison company built a prison in Appleton, Minnesota because it was low cost. Appleton, Minnesota is far away from those who care about the individuals who are incarcerated which means that outcomes are far worse for those incarcerated. We need to create a system that creates good outcomes for all Minnesotans - not create profit centers for greedy corporations.</p>
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<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they</p>	<p>They should be counted as part of the district where they had their last residential address. That best correlates with where their families and neighbors live. When incarcerated people are counted in the place they are incarcerated, their representation</p>
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<p>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>and the money that is allocated for where they live goes to the place where they are incarcerated rather than their home. This means that more representation goes to the places where there happens to be a prison even though that their representatives rarely represent their interests or view them as constituents.</p>
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<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>Restore the Vote, banning of privately held prisons, cannabis legalization and the automatic expungement of criminal records in the case where the offense is no longer a crime, bail reform, reducing the impact of fines and fees (means testing, ceasing the suspension of driver’s licenses if the violations are not related to public safety, etc.).</p>
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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>Part of reducing recidivism and enabling individuals to rejoin our communities is treating them as full citizens who deserve the same level of respect and fair treatment as anyone else. Continuing collateral consequences seems more like a cheaper form of extended incarceration rather than an opportunity for a former inmate to change direction.</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>So much needs to get done to support those re-entering after incarceration like restoring the vote to those who have done their time in prison, reform laws that have disproportionately targets communities of color and low-income communities like cannabis laws, and providing reparative policies and financial resources to invest directly into families and communities.</p> <p>In addition, we must ensure that we fully fund supportive services for residents, ensure there are equitable education opportunities, and pathways to starting to build income and wealth like supporting first time homebuyers. Only communities in which we ensure that every person succeeds, can we really have a united thriving Minnesota. Truly equitable policies are needed especially for those re-entering.</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 Minnesota House has passed a resolution naming racism a public health crisis as well, and I was proud to vote for that resolution. That resolution commits us not only to reform our institution of the House of Representatives but also to think about the lens from how policies are developed. I was proud to</p>
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	<p>vote for it and invested in that work succeeding. I am personally working on legislation related to democracy, cannabis reform, housing financing, immigrant driver's licenses, private prison ban, and low wage worker organizing.</p> <p>The Minnesota Department of Corrections did do widespread testing and found a spread of the disease in Minnesota's prisons. They offered some additional conditional release. And yet, in the middle of the pandemic, they also proposed closing the correctional facilities and moving those who are incarcerated to other prisons that have many people. This pandemic has further shined a light on how our corrections system in Minnesota is in need of reform.</p>
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<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>Essentially every public health crisis has an inequitable impact on people involved in the criminal legal system. It is essential that lawmakers demonstrate the political will to treat all Minnesotans - including those currently involved in the criminal legal system - with empathy and compassion. That means providing the necessary resources to meet a public health crisis, and being willing to consider policies such as early release.</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? What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?</p>	<p>None of these issues have touched my life directly, but everyone has the obligation to seek to undo these core injustices in our system. I believe in people's power to turn their lives around, contribute meaningfully, and set a powerful example for others, and I want my community, and my state, to lead the way in showing how we can create a genuinely equitable society.</p>
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<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>I am confident that if the MN House is ready to pass the legislation that I have outlined here. Maintaining the current majority in the MN House will be necessary but not sufficient; we must also elect a pro-reform majority in the MN Senate. Supporting pro-reform candidates is the way my constituents can most effectively support the changes I have outlined here.</p> <p>My constituents can also support by reaching out to me directly with their ideas, concerns, and questions. Creating and passing legislative solutions is a partnership, I would like to help provide space for open and honest conversations around policing practices in Minnesota and within the district with my constituents to find sustainable and transformational solutions.</p>
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