

NJPSA Questionnaire for NJ Legislature - 2021 General Election

User: Clarke, Christine / Email: christine@clarkeforsenate.com

Survey answered on: 10/10/2021 09:07 AM

1. Legislative District #: (answer type: Number)

26

2. Office You Are Seeking: (answer type: Short Text)

State Senate

3. Party: (answer type: Short Text)

Democrat

4. Campaign Phone Number: (answer type: Short Text)

973-601-7878

5. Campaign Mailing Address: (answer type: Long Text)

Clarke For Senate, P.O. Box 585, Lake Hopatcong, NJ 07849

6. Staff Contact Name and Phone Number (if preferred): (answer type: Long Text)

Benjamin Weisman, Campaign Manager, 973-264-9369

7. State investment in a state level school facilities strategic plan to address long-ignored school infrastructure needs across all school districts in need in New Jersey (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

8. Supporting school employees' (including NJPSA members') rights to collective bargaining (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

9. An ongoing commitment to the scheduled phase-up of funding of public employee pensions according to the schedule set forth in the law (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

10. Private school vouchers in any form (tuition tax credits, opportunity scholarships, etc.) (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Oppose

11. No new unfunded state mandates for public schools (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

12. What health care policy approaches and priorities do you support for our public schools with the goal of maintaining in-person learning? In your mind, since educators are not health professionals, when do you believe a statewide approach is needed and when is a local approach more appropriate in deciding pandemic-related school health policies? (answer type: Long Text)

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I agree that we should be following peer-reviewed scientific consensus on reducing the spread of covid-19 and the delta variant specifically. While local control of decision making on many things is practical, school board meetings have become political theater as science has been politicized to the detriment of public health. I think it was appropriate for the State of New Jersey to make a decision on masking and take that burden off of local school boards, such that they are able to say they must 'follow state guidance' in response to the behaviors they have faced from often out-of-district demonstrators at meetings. Given educators are not health professionals, I generally find it practical to follow the advice of health professionals on matters of public health, and the advice of educators on matters of education. Local control of how to work within and meet the public health parameters makes some sense; whether districts want to continue offering remote options, whether it makes sense given the state of local school buildings and HVAC systems to stagger attendance or change attendance plans, how to best consider special needs, more. As we work through these challenging times, I'm hopeful we will learn from the concerns that have surfaced and build better policies, make smart investments and prioritize protecting our students, teachers and administration as we go forward.

13. What issues do you see in this area and how can you assist local districts in addressing school infrastructure needs in both SDA (Schools Development Authority) districts and regular operating districts? (answer type: Long Text)

In West Milford in particular, we've heard from constituents concerned about mold remediation and school closures on account of it. The water to one school building and the electricity have been off for so long that students still using the field for sports have not had a scoreboard during games nor has the field had water; parents and community volunteers have been taking care of the field so the kids can play. We need investments for HVAC systems and updating gym floors where applicable, and to repair buildings that are repeatedly affected by water and mold issues as well, which impact health concerns that create additional susceptibility to airborne diseases like covid-19. I am hopeful that as public and private investment in the job-creating clean energy economy continue assuming our Governor is re-elected and we move forward, and we implement other agenda points like creating a state bank that can invest in critical work around the state, it may become easier to negotiate the spending necessary to repair these issues without having to discuss or consider raising taxes. In the meantime, I would be happy to work with school boards in our district to continue to identify and raise concerns, and work to bring funding back to our district for repairs and upgrades. Our children and our educators deserve safe schools.

14. As a legislator, will you support professional educators in their work with their students and avoid the temptation to mandate specific programs for every school district as we work to meet the individual needs of each student, school and district? How will you support the work of educators and principals in your district? (answer type: Long Text)

In short, yes, I would absolutely support local districts in making decisions about their programs to suit the needs of students and teachers. I generally don't favor mandates anyhow; the pandemic and protection of public health are an unfortunate exception in which masking has become political rather than a matter of basic health protection, and a decision had to be made. However, I agree that students are different with different needs, and I can see that in my own home with my four children. Each learns differently, views the world differently and takes in information differently. I respect the professional opinions of educators on how best to educate students, and would support their

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17. Will you vote for legislation (S-3284 (Greenstein)/ A-5011 (Wimberly)) that provides the same accidental death benefit to school employees who lost their lives in the service of their school community while performing such essential services? (answer type: Yes/No)

Yes

18. Thinking about the future, what are your goals for our public education system and what actions will you take as a state legislator to support our educators, our students and our schools? (answer type: Long Text)

The nuanced and complicated issues concerning long-term learning, adaptivity of educational environments and questions concerning the prospect of learning loss are going to challenge New Jersey to create policies preparing for the potential of future pandemics while learning from our experiences with covid-19. I am inclined toward policy that benefits teachers and students by erring toward protecting the love of learning and the love of teaching in times of crisis. Either way, teachers and educational professionals need to be at drafting tables advising the legislative process surrounding all of these concerns. I believe in servant leadership in the state legislature, which is to say that as a policy maker I would want experts in their respective fields advising on policies concerning matters within their fields, and I would respect that professional expertise in all that we do.

Separately, as a climate and environmental advocate who has been working on policy to build the clean energy economy right here in New Jersey, with hopes that our state will be at the forefront of renewable energy work, workforce development, technology and deployment, I aim to make sure our state is the Atlantic Coast hub for wind turbine work and solar energy. This benefits us in a number of ways, including in context of raising revenue. The Biden administration is looking to develop 30 MW of clean offshore wind in Atlantic waters, and federal leases already cover 20MW of this if fully developed. Additionally, there are another 7 MW of offshore wind potential in the New York bight, which are shared waters between New Jersey and New York. That will give New Jersey more union, well paying jobs with prevailing wage agreements and good oversight built in to grow a healthy, developing workforce. We need to remain the best state in the nation for public education to develop students prepared for these careers, and I am committed to improving, protecting and maintaining that for us.