

NJPSA Questionnaire for NJ Legislature - 2021 General Election

User: Graner, Elizabeth / Email: elizabethgraner@gmail.com

Survey answered on: 10/6/2021 03:14 PM

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

21

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

Assembly

3. Party: (answer type: Short Text)

Democratic

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

201-988-1126

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

387 Penns Way, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

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

Raine Cuseglio, Campaign Manager 201-306-2442

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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As a public school educator, I fully support statewide mask mandates for all students and staff and vaccine mandates for school employees. If elected, I commit to any legislation that will provide funding to update ventilation in schools.

When it comes to school closures, I believe that it should depend on local COVID infection numbers.

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)

I believe that American Rescue Plan and the CARES Act should absolutely include massive funding to upgrade our schools. Many of our schools are crumbling New Deal-Era structures that simply do not meet the needs of our students, particularly during a global pandemic. I support Governor Murphy's goal to fully fund the School Funding Reform Act, which will benefit all schools and especially address infrastructure needs in districts with greater needs but lower property tax capacity.

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)

If elected (and as a professional educator myself), I will absolutely support my fellow professional educators, particularly in terms of limiting specific mandated programs. In order to support teachers, support personnel, administrators, and supervisors throughout my district, I intend to advocate for fully funding the School Funding Reform Act every single year. As a teacher, I also believe that the state legislature should make a concerted effort to communicate with school leadership and listen to the specific needs of those who work with students when working on legislation that directly affects them.

15. Do you believe New Jersey students should pass a state graduation test or demonstrate proficiency in math and language arts standards as described above to earn a high school diploma? (answer type: Long Text)

I believe that a single (and high stakes) standardized test merely provides a snapshot of student achievement on a single day and in no way reflects student learning. Instead of relying on the NJSLA (or any other national standardized test score) alone, schools should develop their own set of graduation requirements -- more of a portfolio approach -- as determined by a collaboration among teachers, building administrators, and district-level supervisors. I agree that doing so would create more reliable and holistic data.

16. As a legislator, what will you do to promote education as a positive career path to our youth and what types of initiatives will you consider to enhance the educational career pipeline for the future? How will you promote diversity within our future workforce? (answer type: Long Text)

As an educator, I am already seeing evidence of the looming teacher shortage crisis. This year, several science teachers have taken on extra classes for stipends and class sizes in the English and history departments are very large due to decisions not to replace retirees. The legislature must acknowledge this crisis and seek ways to recruit and retain quality educators to the profession, such as proposing legislation to address closing the teacher pay gap, fully funding the teacher pension

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system, ensuring that health benefits remain affordable, providing service scholarships for teacher preparation programs, and student loan forgiveness.

In order that the teacher population reflects New Jersey's rich diversity, lawmakers must support legislation to diversify the state's teaching profession. The State Legislature must strengthen and expand minority educator incentive programs that focus on loan forgiveness and grant opportunities for teacher preparation programs. Districts should be incentivized to work collaboratively with local colleges to engage in high quality teacher residency programs with a focus on teachers of color. There should be state funding for intensive teacher preparation support programs that offer mentoring, tutoring, and job placement to make sure that teachers of color successfully complete preparation programs.

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)

As a legislator, I vow to advocate for all New Jersey students and educators. I got into this race because the pandemic highlighted specific inequities within our society, especially our school buildings. My son's school was easily able to transition into a hybrid learning model last year, while the district in which I work had many hurdles to clear before even considering opening to students. Currently, 46% of school districts are underfunded. New Jersey must fully fund the School Funding Reform Act to help all districts counter the effects of poverty, as most of our underfunded and lower-performing schools are in communities of color.

We must continue to work toward and advocate for the success of universal Pre-K in our state and concentrate efforts on creating a more "community school" based model. We must work to create a state child tax credit with a lower income eligibility threshold and guidelines to include immigrant families. We must also increase SNAP outreach so more needy families can have access to better nutrition. We must also increase the childcare tax credit and more subsidies for childcare.

Finally, our pension system must be fully funded. I am absolutely committed to ensuring a full funding of the state pension system. Insufficient funding from the state coupled with disappointing investment returns had a negative impact on an already dire situation. I applaud Governor Murphy's vow to fully fund the public pension system, but this is the first step in undoing the damage done to our pensions dating back to 1996 and compounded by the 2008 recession and its aftermath.