

Dane Dems Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for seeking an endorsement from the Dane County Democratic Party. You do not need to answer all of the questions below, but please answer all of the ones you feel are pertinent to your campaign. We will ask more detailed questions and followups during our interview, if we choose to have one, so feel free to answer these questions as briefly or thoroughly as you desire. These answers will be shared in full with our membership before they vote on your endorsement.

Email *

michelle4D18@gmail.com

Candidate name *

Michelle Ellinger Linley

Position you are running for (include municipality) *

Madison Common Council District 18

Campaign website

michelle4d18.com

Professional Experience *

I am a life-long Madison area resident and a proud Northsider for nearly two decades, currently living in the Lakeview Hills neighborhood. A small business owner, I am the Founder and Family Care Coordinator of Madison Newborn Care; with a team of employees, we provide post-natal/neonatal assistance and guidance to new children and families in the Madison area, where I am proud to prioritize employing a diverse workforce and paying a living wage. I have also worked with incarcerated birthing people and young parents via the Small Miracles Doula Program and volunteering with the Madison Area Donor Milk Alliance. I am a mom of three teenage sons who attend MMSD schools.

Political/Service Experience *

I have participated in numerous local efforts, including community programs, small business initiatives, and employment opportunities. I have long supported area students as a volunteer with Moms on a Mission at East High School and other school-based programs within the MMSD system. I also have been heavily involved in civic engagement in my Northside community, from my work on the PTA for Lake View Elementary to leading in my neighborhood on the Board of Friends of Lake View Hill Park and serving as a Fresh Fruit and Veggie Coordinator for MMSD. My most recent experience is bringing in various community groups, from neighbors to businesses, to improve, enhance, and bring more housing to Madison with the Raemisch Farm Work Group; it is because of this experience I understand the crucial importance of bringing everyone to the table to achieve the best results; that's how to do what's best for Madison, and that's how I want to do what's best for the Northside. I have been in many community advocacy positions, including: Co-chair, Friends of Wisconsin Midwives (2008-2010) PTA Vice President, Green Team member, Lake View Elementary (2010-2021) Fresh Fruit and Veggie coordinator, REAP and MMSD (2012, 2020, 2021) Founder, Northside Neighborhoods Facebook Group (2017-present) Board of Directors, Friends of Lake View Hill Park (current) Volunteer, Safe Skies, Clean Water (2020-2022) Founding member, Raemisch Farm Work Group (2020-2022) Volunteer, Moms on a Mission at East High School (current) I have also been an active Democratic party volunteer and kitchen cabinet member of various campaigns.

Why are you running for this seat? *

Community is essential to me and my work and advocacy. I want to continue strengthening our community so that all Northsiders can thrive. I want to tackle our most complex challenges by advocating for our best interests, finding practical solutions, and building a community we can all thrive in.

My approach to elected office will be to build community relationships and listen to community members. This grassroots, bottom-up approach is one I feel works best to ensure our local democracy is healthy and we maintain our reputation for good government.

While I have experience working with local government, such as with the Raemisch Farm Work Group, I firmly believe that an elected official is only as strong as their ties to the community. This also means I can turn to the many experts and advocates in the community on any issues that arise, even if I am not as well-versed in them.

What are the three most important issues in your race? *

- 1) Safe, healthy communities - investing in mental health resources, more youth programming, equitable opportunities in employment and education, and increasing housing options
 - 2) Investment in living wage jobs and local businesses - supporting working people, the labor movement, and investing in local small businesses with community ties.
 - 3) Environmental protection and sustainability - protecting our parks and green spaces and investing in sustainability measures that help build community health, such as community gardens and urban farming.
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What are the largest environmental concerns you aim to deal with in office?

Big picture, we as a city must move away from total car dependency and expand our public transit, biking accessibility, walkability, and other modes of transportation. This is an equity and environmental issue for our communities that have struggled to get the attention of needed ecological advocacy.

Additionally, the Northside has some of Madison's, if not Dane County's, most pristine, beautiful, and unique green spaces. We should prioritize a place for parks and lakes as crucial parts, not a tacked-on feature of future development in our primarily residential community on the Northside. I also want to support community-based solutions, such as community gardens and urban farming, and reward small businesses that prioritize efforts to use renewable, locally sourced materials.

How will you use your position to create more equitable opportunities and help those living in poverty?

To build up our communities, we must promote living wage jobs and anchor institutions founded locally that will become central to our local character. Also, we must find ways to help cover the gaps in our social safety net, especially with the loss of pandemic emergency funding, helping with rental assistance and food access.

To address those issues, we need to make it easy for residents to start and maintain small businesses, especially businesses that pay a living wage, prioritize the targeted funding we have that keeps families in their homes, increase resources in underserved neighborhoods, like parks and green space, and expand funding for violence prevention and reduction.

What will you do to address racial inequality?

I'm proud to live in one of Madison's more racially diverse districts. I believe the city can significantly foster community building and entrepreneurship within District 18's communities of color. Focusing on community programming & mental health supports instead of criminalization and punitive responses and pushing for more living wage economic opportunities are all things that would disproportionately benefit our communities of color that our old ways of urban planning and development have failed to.

I would love to imagine a future in District 18 where communities of color have locally owned businesses that serve their wants and needs within walking distance, so there is pride and investment in our neighborhoods. I want our communities to see themselves in the businesses, community organizations, and public spaces in my district and throughout the city.

How will you promote restorative justice and address racially biased policing?

Meeting people's mental health needs is a significant component of addressing public safety. I want to serve on the Public Safety Review Committee to expand support and resources for those struggling in our community. Programs such as our CARES team can help us to address mental health crises, help those in need and alleviate the pressure on our criminal justice system. I will support investment in community-based public safety programs and efforts, such as partnering with Dane County's Community Restorative Court. A strong and supported community is essential as a violence prevention and reduction tool.

How will you improve the public health of our community in your position?

As mentioned before, moving away from cars and promoting walking, biking, and public transit is also part of our mission of improving public health. I also want to see community gardens and urban agriculture promoted and utilized to have local access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We should also take the critical lessons from the pandemic as a guidepost for dealing with regional and localized public health crises and challenges.

What are the largest transportation issues you wish to work on and how will you address them?

I've mentioned this multiple times before, but it must be emphasized, Car dependency is:

terrible for the environment.

Awful for health.

Bad for socioeconomic disparities.

It isn't suitable for public safety.

Driving is one of the most dangerous things in Madison, but many of us are forced to do it to get to work, get groceries, etc. We must emphasize walkability in our business and housing developments. We need protected bike lanes and to promote biking as a mode of transportation, not just recreation. We need to expand public transit. We should be proud that the city council voted to support transit overlay districts for the future of transit-oriented housing development.

We should analyze our BRT proposals from a racial, socioeconomic, & disability equity lens and ensure we are promoting equity on all fronts as we move forward with this needed project rather than exacerbating inequities. We should find ways to partner with the proposed Amtrak expansion to better our public transit network and implement those plans to benefit our most vulnerable communities rather than harm them.

How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?

The job of an alder is to use your experience and skills to build relationships INSIDE the city to help residents OUTSIDE city hall have a meaningful voice in our future. I will consistently seek conversations connecting residents, workers, families, businesses, and our government to get the best solutions to challenging issues.

My goal is to meet the needs of District 18 residents above all else. I am proud to run for alder in such a diverse district - racially, socioeconomically, and beyond. We must collectively keep at the forefront these critical voices, and I want to develop a collaborative approach that ensures all stakeholders feel heard and listened to.

My previous work with residents, community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, & the city reminds me that authentic leadership is when you listen, THEN lead on issues, not the other way around. I will do all I can to prioritize equity in who I reach out to, consider, and engage with. I seek opportunities to develop better relationships with communities historically left out of policymaking in Madison.

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

Good government is responding to emails and calls from your constituents. Good government connects neighbors and neighborhoods to find solutions. Good government is hearing what everyone has to say, even if they disagree with you.

To my fellow Democrats - I hear you. My goal is always to listen and hear what you say in the most respectful way possible. I want to put folks with fresh new ideas next to people who have been leading for years; I want to put business people next to working people so we can shape our future together; and I want folks who live on the Northside, no matter if they own or rent their home to know they have a seat at the table.

That is not only good government but the key to the health of our civic democracy.

I pledge to be an accessible alder who will listen to all residents, be engaged at community events, and assist everyday district residents in getting involved with the city!

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