

Dane Dems Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for seeking an endorsement from the Dane County Democratic Party. **This questionnaire is due by no later than Friday, January 24, at 11:59 PM.**

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 and mark the questions you do not feel are pertinent N/A. 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 *

christopher.sonne@gmail.com

Candidate name *

Christopher Sonne

Position you are running for (include municipality) *

Waunakee Community School District Board of Education Dane/Springfield Seat

Campaign website

N/A

Professional Experience *

With fifteen years of experience in senior leadership positions in the private sector, a background in crisis and risk management, and a track record of working collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners, I bring a unique perspective and skill set to the Board of Education. My expertise includes managing budgets and spending efficiently to achieve strategic goals while ensuring fiscal responsibility. This experience equips me to navigate complex challenges, advocate effectively for resources, and ensure our schools are prepared to meet the needs of all students and families.

Political/Service Experience *

No past political experience outside of volunteering for the Wis Dems Voter Protection Team as a poll observer for the past several years and as a phone bank volunteer.

Why are you running for this seat? *

My family and I moved to Waunakee because of the exceptional reputation of its schools, seeking the best possible learning opportunities for our three children. Like so many others, we wanted our children to thrive in a community that values education, equity, and opportunity. I'm running to make sure every family in our district can count on the same opportunities that brought my family to Waunakee.

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

1. Every child deserves an environment where they can thrive and reach their full potential. I will work to create classrooms where all students feel valued, supported, and equipped for success. By focusing on programs that address diverse learning needs and ensuring equitable access to resources, we can build a school community where every student has the tools to succeed academically and personally.
2. Our educators are the backbone of our school system, and we must give them the tools, training, and support to continue delivering excellent education. Teachers across Wisconsin are facing significant challenges, including staffing shortages, increasing classroom sizes, and a lack of competitive pay compared to neighboring states. These challenges affect both the quality of education for our students and the well-being of our teachers.
3. The strength of our schools lies in the partnership between families, educators, and the broader community. I believe in fostering open communication, bringing people together, and prioritizing transparency to ensure every voice in our community is heard. This collaborative approach allows us to address challenges creatively and make data-driven decisions that benefit our students, educators, and families. My experience in managing complex budgets has taught me how to maximize impact while being a good fiscal steward of community resources.

What are the largest environmental concerns you aim to deal with in office?

As a candidate for the school board, I am committed to ensuring that facility development minimizes environmental impact and embraces renewable energy strategies. I will advocate for sustainable design principles in new construction and renovations, prioritizing energy-efficient materials and green certifications like LEED. For existing facilities, I will support upgrades such as LED lighting, advanced HVAC systems, and improved insulation to reduce energy consumption and operational costs while creating healthier learning environments.

Incorporating renewable energy sources like solar panels and geothermal systems will be a priority, both to reduce the district's carbon footprint and to achieve long-term cost savings. I also see these efforts as educational opportunities, integrating renewable energy projects into the curriculum to teach students about sustainability and environmental responsibility. Through transparency and collaboration with the community, I will work to build consensus on environmentally responsible decisions, ensuring our schools lead by example in addressing climate change and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship.

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

To create more equitable opportunities, I will focus on increasing academic resources such as tutoring programs, literacy initiatives, and after-school opportunities while expanding access to social-emotional supports by advocating for more counselors and social workers. I will also prioritize creating career readiness opportunities by partnering with local companies to provide mentorships, internships, and job shadowing for economically disadvantaged students. These initiatives are essential to ensuring all students have the resources and support they need to succeed, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Additionally, I will advocate for eliminating barriers to extracurricular activities by offering fee waivers, scholarships, and transportation support to ensure every student can participate fully. Expanding access to essential school supplies through back-to-school drives, partnerships, and resource closets will further support students in need. Recognizing the importance of early childhood education, I will work to protect access to pre-kindergarten programs to close opportunity gaps and give every child a strong foundation for success.

What will you do to address racial inequality, promote restorative justice, and/or address racially biased policing?

I am committed to addressing racial inequality in Waunakee schools by promoting culturally responsive teaching practices and supporting curricula that reflect diverse histories and perspectives. I will advocate for professional development for teachers and staff on implicit bias, equity, and restorative practices to foster an inclusive learning environment. Additionally, I will support initiatives that engage students and families from all racial backgrounds, such as mentorship programs and peer support networks, to ensure every student feels valued and heard. To address racial bullying among students, I will advocate for clear anti-bullying policies and peer mediation programs designed to resolve conflicts and promote understanding.

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

I will advocate for sensible, low-cost public health initiatives that benefit students, staff, and families within Waunakee schools. This includes enhancing health education to cover nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and hygiene practices, often supported by local healthcare providers or public health departments at little to no cost. Mental health awareness will be a priority, with workshops and events provided through community collaborations. By leveraging community partnerships and integrating public health topics into the curriculum, we can create a healthier school environment without significant financial burden.

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

One of the greatest transportation issues facing students in Waunakee is ensuring safe, reliable, and equitable access to school for all students, particularly those in rural areas. Traffic congestion around schools during drop-off and pick-up times poses safety risks and delays, while limited busing options and long bus rides can be challenging for students and families. These issues can be addressed by expanding bus routes and optimizing schedules to reduce travel times, implementing programs to encourage walking and biking with proper infrastructure like crosswalks and bike lanes, and promoting carpooling initiatives to ease congestion. Additionally, incorporating crossing guards, traffic flow improvements, and partnerships with local law enforcement can enhance safety for students traveling to and from school.

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

As a new candidate to politics, I have not yet had the opportunity to support these important areas, but I am committed to supporting and advancing this work if elected. I will prioritize learning from and collaborating with individuals from all backgrounds to ensure their perspectives are represented in decision-making. By fostering open dialogue, supporting equity-supportive policies, and creating opportunities for underrepresented voices to be heard, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable community.

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

As a school board candidate with a democratic endorsement, I am committed to supporting the autonomy of teachers and minimizing outside political interference in our schools. I will advocate for policies that empower educators to make decisions rooted in their professional expertise, ensuring that curriculum and classroom practices prioritize the needs of students over political agendas. By fostering an environment of trust, collaboration, and respect for teachers, I will work to protect their ability to educate without undue influence while advocating for fair compensation and resources to help them thrive.