

ARRM 2016 Minnesota Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Ben Lien
MN House 4A

Section #1

Question #1

I've served two terms in the Minnesota State House representing my hometown. During my two terms, I've focused on higher education, property taxes and economic development. Before being elected to the House, I worked for a non-profit credit counseling organization helping people with monthly budgets, personal debt and mortgage issues.

Question #2

If elected to a third term, my priorities will continue to be border city legislation for my district, infrastructure for my district, higher education and economic development. I'm really interested in bringing higher education and private-sector employers together. Specifically, we need to find ways to get folks into the workforce to fill high demand jobs and reduce higher education costs for students.

Question #3

I don't have any personal connections or experiences with the disability community. I have visited several long-term care organizations and group homes in my district, as well as senior living facilities.

Section #2

Question #1

I understand the challenges long-term and senior care organizations face in meeting employment needs. My district is on the border with North Dakota. This presents a challenge as organizations are able to pay higher starting salaries for the same jobs across the border. We need to find a solution that will commit Minnesota to making these jobs pay better. They are professional jobs and need to be seen as such. I've supported rate increase in the past; however, that is only piecemeal. Permanent or dedicated funding is ultimately the real solution.

Question #2

I support the use of public dollars to bring the best service possible to those who rely on long-term and senior care organizations, including through new technologies such as broadband. I do think the first priority, as it relates directly to public dollars and long-term/senior care, needs to be staff and increasing salaries to meet workforce needs; however, we need to allow technology to develop that will improve care for people.

Section #3

Question #1

I support uses of public dollars to get more people with disabilities into the workforce, more supportive housing, more community-based support services (such as workforce organizations for people with mental illnesses) and ways to reduce the costs of higher education (along with more mental health support on public college campuses).

Question #2

I've been proud to support affordable and supportive housing during my tenure in the Legislature through capital investment dollars. Studies and practice show it is more cost effective to provide supportive housing than it is to have people revolving through the criminal justice and emergency healthcare systems. It can also lead to more people contributing to society through employment and community engagement.

Question #3

The state needs to do a better job of keeping up with the costs of employment for long-term and senior care organizations; especially as these organizations rely on state dollars to pay employees. I support the state making a firm commitment to ensuring these organizations receive long-term, reliable funding to best compensate their employees and provide the best care for their clients.