

2018 SPFT Public Candidate Questionnaire: House District 67B

Please limit the following questions to a yes or no response.

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Teachers (SPFT) believes parents, educators, community members, and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, increasingly out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda have poured money into political races with the goal of removing local voices from discussions about our children's education.
 - a. **Will you and your campaign reject contributions and independent expenditures from wealthy donors who live outside our community and from market-based education reform organizations? YES**

2. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is currently facing a budget shortfall. This is a major obstacle in closing the racial equity gap through expanding programs like restorative practices in our schools. In addition to identifying additional funding sources, SPFT believes we must ask for support from residents for our public schools in the form of a funding referendum increase in 2018.
 - a. **Will you as endorse, support, and campaign for this referendum increase to benefit our public schools? YES**

3. The Twin Cities has been named one of the best places to live in the country, yet many of our residents - particularly in communities of color - struggle to make ends meet, often working two or more jobs and struggling with few or no benefits. Many labor and community organizations have championed a \$15 minimum wage and earned safe and sick time, issues that affect Saint Paul staff, parents, and community members.
 - a. **Will you and your campaign support and endorse a \$15 minimum wage, rejecting carve-outs and tip penalties, and earned safe and sick time for all workers? YES**

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions and will you fight to protect them? YES**

Please limit your response to 150 words or fewer for each part of the questions below.

1. ***What is the value of public education for you and for the city of Saint Paul?***

Jay Xiong: I am a proud graduate of SPPS and know first hand how much education ties into success for our students and families. As a State Representative, I will dedicate myself to work hardest for our children, who often don't have a voice because they can't vote, or because they are too hungry, too poor, or simply don't have equal opportunities. I look forward to making new friends across all sectors to help improve our education system to ensure our children, who are our future, have a world class education.

2. *SPPS has a diverse student population, with over 75% of students identifying as People of Color. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent curricula and educators that reflect the diversity of our city. At the same time, data shows that our city and our schools are becoming more segregated.*

a. Segregation and poverty are harmful to all of us, especially our students and their families. How will you work to integrate our city and our schools?

Jay Xiong: Our state ranks nationally for a wonderful education system. But when you disaggregate the data, our children of color have a huge achievement gap, one of the worse in the country compared to their white peers. We should be proud that this is a great place to live and learn. But we also should fight hard to ensure all children can achieve their dreams and reach their highest potential, regardless of race, class or background. I will work with stakeholders, community leaders, and city, county, state, federal elected officials to craft sound policies supporting our students, teachers, and families.

3. *Research shows the importance of stimulation starting at birth. Quality daycare and pre-school programs staffed by trained educators are critical to helping children to be ready for school.*

a. How will you partner with SPFT to ensure all families have access to quality Pre-K and early learning programs in our city?

Jay Xiong: I will work with stakeholders, elected officials, communities, SPFT to fight for quality Pre-K and early learning programs.

b. New research shows that many Minnesotans live in childcare deserts, without adequate access to childcare options for their children. How will you use your role to provide additional options early learning options for parents?

Jay Xiong: In a district where poverty is heavily concentrated, and childcare service is a financial challenge for many families, I will look into policies and work with communities across the board to ensure the legislature provides additional options for parents.

4. *Across the Twin Cities, more and more students are choosing to “opt-out” of standardized testing. Recent reporting by MPR, MinnPost and the Saint Paul Pioneer Press suggests that testing is costly, time consuming, and does not provide useful information for educators.*

a. What is the appropriate use of data from standardized tests and interim assessments? What changes would you recommend? Please comment on the use of standardized tests and interim assessments in high stakes decisions such as school closure and staffing.

Jay Xiong: I am not familiar with this issue and will be looking into it to ensure we are sensitive to the issue and give our students and educators the best resources.

b. How will you support parents and educators in the “opt-out” movement?

Jay Xiong: See “a.” response.

5. *Saint Paul is home to diverse communities, including many newcomers to the United States. Public schools play a large role in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new city, while still valuing and retaining strong cultural ties.*

a. How will you use your position to prioritize support for English Learners, especially for newcomers and their families?

Jay Xiong: I am a first generation Hmong American who attended grade school through the ESL/ELL program. I have worked with Rep. Fue Lee on funding for newcomers, and other lawmakers previously to support legislation for ELL students. Every student deserves the best and we can make it happen in St. Paul and in MN. I will be a staunch advocate for ELL students. I know the challenges as well as the opportunities.

b. How will you work to protect immigrant and refugee students and their families in the face of a hostile federal government?

Jay Xiong: I co-founded two social justice nonprofits, have worked with elected officials, community activists, to fight the backward batshit Trump administration. I am a son of refugee immigrants. I am not going to turn my back on my refugee and immigrant brothers and sisters. We must have the will to stand up and fight the racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, right wing agenda.

6. *SPPS and the City of Saint Paul presently do business with institutions that engage in practices that destabilize our community through predatory lending practices, investing in private prisons, and corporate tax avoidance. Additionally, TIF Districts (Tax Increment Financing) have been created in a way that disproportionately enrich corporations and big banks. Additionally, approximately 30% of properties, including many of the most valuable pieces of land in the city, pay no taxes to the city of Saint Paul, placing a heavy burden on our families. These practices have led to economic injustice and racial discrimination in our city.*

a. How will you use your role to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?

Jay Xiong: We need to get these corporate welfare groups to pay up. My role as a state legislator, my role as a resident of St. Paul, my role as a human being, I will not sit on the sideline and watch corporate America profit off my people while we have some of the largest disparities in the nation. I will work with whoever has the will to get this done right.

b. Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, destabilizing families. Will you join with SPFT in calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of school age students during the school year? What steps will you take to separate the city of Saint Paul from institutions that participate in predatory lending?

Jay Xiong: YES. I will work with St. Paul legislators, city officials, the county, and stakeholders to have this conversation.

c. Will you work with SPFT to ask Saint Paul's wealthiest non-profits to pay their fair share and institute a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program that benefits our public schools?

Jay Xiong: YES.

d. Will you commit to working with SPFT to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools? What does this look like to you?

Jay Xiong: YES. What I'd like to see is less lip service and more action done. It's time to get it right and get it done. SPPS is a minority majority district. We need to start having better policies and leaders who reflect our values and the changing faces of the city.

7. *Educators want to do their best and have many great ideas and solutions for ensuring all students can be successful, but their voices are often not listened to.*

a. What are your ideas to help educators, in partnership with parents and community, have a voice in education policy so that their professional expertise and deep knowledge of each student can best benefit our public schools?

Jay Xiong: We need to do a better job listening to our educators, parents and community.

8. *The current Secretary of Education is well-known for her support of "disrupting" public education through "school choice" in the form of online learning, charter schools, vouchers, and alternative licensure.*

a. What is your understanding of how education reform policies affect public education?

Jay Xiong: "Education reform". While I am mindful of the different ideas about how to improve our education system, I am open to having conversations with stakeholders, educators, parents, students and community members to make an informed decision.

b. Do you support changes to teacher licensure, and why?

Jay Xiong: No.

c. How will you work to protect public education?

Jay Xiong: Working with groups like SPFT, teachers, communities, stakeholders to get it done and get it right for our students, families, and educators.

9. What specific steps will you take to protect the right of workers – especially public sector workers – to bargain collectively?

Jay Xiong: I am a public employee. Labor organizations have been at the forefront fighting for our working families -- protecting my refugee immigrant parents to advocating for me and my colleagues in the public and private sectors. No way I will turn my back on this issue.