

ARRM QUESTIONNAIRE

August 31, 2018

Name: Michael Howard

District: 50A

ABOUT YOURSELF

Question #1: Bio

I am running for the Minnesota House because I believe our politics can be a positive force to improve lives. I learned this as an intern on Senator Paul Wellstone's campaign and ever since I have been committed to community and public service.

I have experience at the community level and at the State Capitol. Serving several years as Communication Director for the Minnesota House DFL Caucus, I led communication efforts to help pass the most progressive agenda in a generation - including a minimum wage increase, a historic investment in education, and the freedom to marry. For the last four years I have had the honor of representing the City of Richfield as Councilmember At-Large. I am excited about progress we've made to become a more welcoming, inclusive city.

My wife Sarah and I live in Richfield with our 3-year-old son Calvin.

Question #2 – What do you hope to accomplish by running for office? What are your main priorities?

As I mentioned above, I am running for the legislature because I believe it can be a powerful place to improve lives. My priorities will be those that tear down barriers and lift up a more equitable future for everyone. Specifically, I will be a tireless advocate to address our state's affordable housing crisis. In addition, I want to be a leading voice to help address our workforce shortage of PCA's and in-home care workers. I also want to focus on investing in education and narrowing our achievement gap. I have interest in broad set of committees, but education, health and human services, and jobs/housing come to mind.

Question #3 – What experience or connections, if any, do you have with people with disabilities?

Connections with people with disabilities have shaped my values. My mom taught as an elementary special education teacher for forty years. Time and again, I saw how my mom could unlock the potential of her students by listening, learning and being present for the individual needs of her students.

In my first job after college I worked as a PCA for two children with autism. I gained a lifelong appreciation for this work and how vital our PCA's and in-home care workers are to the quality of life for so many Minnesotans with disabilities.

OUR WORKFORCE CRISIS

Question #1

Addressing our workforce shortage for direct support professionals and personal care assistants will be one of my top priorities. This is personal to me. As I mentioned above, I worked as a PCA for two children with autism in my first job after college. While there are many issues driving our workforce shortage, the biggest problem is that we are simply not paying our PCA and direct support professionals nearly enough. I will be a strong advocate at the legislature for increased funding so that we can raise the wages of our PCAs and direct support professionals. This is a crisis that demands urgent action in the next legislative session.

Question #2

The 7% rate cut to waivers that occurred this session is a completely unacceptable. I will work with legislators on a bipartisan basis to reverse this cut and make sure we are doing more to adequately fund reimbursement rates.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR SYSTEM

Question #1

I support moving Minnesota to a single-payer health care system so that all Minnesotans have access to the health care they need, when they need it. There is too much inefficiency in a health care system that is driven by profits rather than quality of care. It's time for transformational change to ensure that we build a health care system that is sturdy for the long-term and one that guarantees coverage to Minnesotans that need it.

Over the years, I have seen when services for people with disabilities are threatened. I will be a legislator that connects our community to the Capitol so that their voices can be heard. The voices of Minnesotans with disabilities are powerful and I look forward to being a partner in this work.

Question #2

We should be doing things like raising wages and ensuring we have adequate regulatory structures, but also be mindful of the pressures or unintended consequences that may come as a result. I will work closely with my community and with organizations that I trust, such as ARRM, to ensure that if we are voting on a particular new policy, we are doing our best to understand the full impact so that we can adjust accordingly.

Question #3

As a legislator, it is important to understand the historical context of the Olmsted Plan and to be vigilant in ensuring we are moving forward to realize the important goals set forth in the plan.