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2020 Pierce County Democrats Endorsement Questionnaire
-Non-Partisan Election-

Candidate name: Chris Reykdal

Position sought: Superintendent of Public Instruction

Date submitted: 3/12/20

Candidate qualities and conduct: The Pierce County Democratic Central Committee endorses and supports qualified candidates seeking elected “non-partisan” office. When deciding whether to recommend endorsement, the Endorsements Committee may consider the candidate’s dedication to values and principles that match those of the Democratic Party, the viability of the campaign, and the candidate’s qualifications for office, among other things. Endorsed candidates are discouraged from supporting any candidate who doesn’t represent Democratic values. Endorsed candidates should distinguish themselves from their opponents in an objectively fair, informational, and non-confrontational fashion.

By submitting this endorsement questionnaire, I publicly affirm:

- I will abide by the above principles of conduct.

You may respond N/A (not applicable) if appropriate. Expand or decrease space as needed.

Questions

1. Why are you running for this particular office?

I have been honored to serve as State Superintendent in my first term. We have created incredible momentum in student achievement, education funding, and progress on closing equity gaps. There is much left to achieve including the next round of considerable supports for mental health, counseling, nursing, and other vital whole-child supports that were mostly left out of the McCleary funding.

2. What are your qualifications (traditional or not) for seeking this elected office?
 - Current State Superintendent
 - Former teacher, school board member, legislator, higher education executive, parent of two public school students, and a proud public school student myself.
3. What are the 1 - 3 most important issues facing your district or your elected body/office?

- Supporting our most vulnerable youth, including LGBTQ students, immigrant youth, and our students with disabilities, even as well funded political organizations try to suppress these students' critical needs.
 - Moving past the basic McCleary funding model to a next generation model that better recognizes student supports.
 - Capital budget equity across the state.
 - Managing through this once in a hundred-year pandemic that is COVID-19
4. Why should the Pierce County Democratic Party support you for this position, and how have you demonstrated values that match ours?
- I have been a life-long Democrat, but I work across the aisle. As a Democratic law maker and State Superintendent, I have stood tall for our Democratic values even as well-organized conservative groups have attacked me personally and attacked the needs of our students. From ensuring teacher salary increases to supporting our students' need for medically accurate, age-appropriate sexual health and assault prevention curriculum, I've tried to lead with risk taking on behalf of what is right for our students. I have great relationships on both sides of the political aisle because I still believe we can have personal convictions and core values and make progress even as we disagree on some solutions. Education is most often bipartisan, but when it comes to defending our students, upholding science, and sustainable tax policy to fund it, I won't hesitate to lead with my Democratic values.
5. When elected, how will you make yourself accessible, and how would you obtain constituent input on issues and decisions?
- I have opened up multiple access points to communicate with my team and me directly. I take invitation to engage groups, and I travel 2,000 to 3,000 miles a month for eight months of the year listening and learning in communities.
6. How have you previously provided and how would you increase access and influence for people and groups that may lack them?
- Besides my personal travels in diverse communities across the state, we also have advisory groups for our bilingual and migrant education programs, our Native Education Office, and our special education services. We also directly survey and seek feedback from groups in some online and paper formats that we translate into nine or ten languages depending on the project.

7. Do you support unrestricted access to reproductive health care for all women, including the right to abortion?
 - Yes, unequivocally, no exceptions, no caveats, no conditions.

8. What are the core functions of the elected office/body you seek; how can you improve them?
 - We allocate \$13 billion per year, collect student performance data, establish learning standards, and a host of other regulatory and support functions including transportation, school meals, student supports, teacher certifications, special education services, career and technical education, and so much more. If it touches K-12, we have a role in it.
 - We have adopted a continuous improvement concept at OSPI, we monitor student performance and we focus on support to school districts towards consistent growth and achievement, not standardized test scores.

9. Please list any key endorsements.
 - The season is young and I am hoping to get an early start with the Pierce County Democrats. I have already earned the support of Public School Employees/SEIU 1948, UA Local 598, Machinists 751, Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 26, and multiple tribes. In my first election for this seat I earned the endorsement or co-endorsement of every labor organization that endorsed in that race. I will work hard to earn their support once again.

IF ELECTED TO THIS POSITION (*some questions may not be applicable*):

10. What would you do to ensure that your constituents each have a truly equal and fair opportunity to succeed based on merit and effort, rather than pre-existing status or classification?
 - Public education at its best gives students an equitable opportunity to achieve their highest potential and greatest ideals. It helped lift me out of substantial childhood poverty. At its worst, institutional racism continues to systemically oppress opportunity for communities of color, English Language learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. My entire first four years in this office have been focused on tearing down institutional barriers. We have:
 - o Developed a new school accountability system so we can finally shine light on system barriers right down to the school level;

- Increased K-12 investments by over \$4 billion per year or \$3,500+ per student so we don't rely as heavily on the inequities of local levies;
- Increased educator salaries so we can recruit and retain educators; new teachers of color are finally growing at a faster rate than their white peers;
- Delinked high-stakes testing from graduation. These tests fail to recognize the systemic bias that leads to the disparate results;
- Added career and technical education pathways to graduation to improve access to incredible jobs that require critical thinkers and skilled workers. We are eliminating the "university for all" culture;
- Ensured that state forest revenue stays with local school districts. Rural students face huge economic barriers to equitable school funding;
- Raised graduation rates to a record high with students of color now growing at a faster rate than the state average; and
- Risen to a top 15 state nationally in English language arts and math (National Assessment of Educational Progress).

11. What benefits and problems come from increasing population; how would you address them?

- Financial risk, climate change, diminishing water quality, food insecurity, and unstable housing and a host of other issues are derivatives of unsustainable population gain in some communities and certainly in the world as a whole. The benefits of unsustainable population gains are few if any. The answer is widely accessible family planning, high quality learning, and relentless policies that focus on gender equity.

12. How would you support workers, including union workers, whether employed privately or by government?

- I've been a member of three unions in my life, Woodworkers, Teamsters, and WEA. I had a 99%+ voting record with the State Labor Council as a Legislator (I voted against a Hollywood movie tax break and that kept me from a perfect score 😊). I chaired the working families caucus in the House and as Superintendent I have stood with WEA, PSE, and Teamsters, and others for their right to bargain, to expand their access to healthcare, and to ensure that educators were integral in our budget and policy development work.

13. What policies and actions would you take to protect and improve the natural environment?

- We have been building our climate science supports for districts and we have secured an additional \$3 million per year in program and professional development supports.

We have partnerships with schools, non-profits, and the private sector to grow our outdoor education learning programs, and in my role on the Board of Natural Resources I have tried to be a voice of longer-term sustainable timber harvest that balances the needs for species preservation, rural jobs, and school construction funding. I would like to see a transition of our second “lab” science in schools to be a climate science course specifically, but the Legislature and the State Board of Education have a role in that policy change.

14. What would you do to increase housing access and decrease income inequality?

- It begins and ends with education. High quality – equitable – education programs that empower the individual combined with a broader public education on the causes and consequences of income inequality. The 20+ year obsession with standardized testing in two subjects set us back. We lost substantial offerings at the high school level in economics and personal finance. I will fight hard to bring them back!
- I was also the first Superintendent to draft a capital gains tax policy to complement my budget requests for more student supports.

15. Identify any budget challenges for your elected office/body; how would you deal with them?

- COVID-19 is going to cause a dramatic impact on state revenues and overall economic activity. Sustaining the McCleary K-12 investments will be at risk next biennium. This at a time when we need to be increasing our investment in comprehensive supports like school counseling, mental health, and nursing services.

16. How will you approach safety, police, and court system issues – and what are they?

- We have grown safety supports in all nine of our regional Education Service Districts to help schools with emergency planning and threat assessments. We have chosen to focus on mental health supports and NOT more armed school resource officers during my administration. We have partnered with the Legislature to focus on local truancy boards instead of punitive court processes that just exacerbate the school to prison pipeline. Finally, we completely rewrote our discipline rules to address racial inequities of school discipline from classroom exclusions to long-term suspensions.

17. Finally, any additional comments you would like to share with the Committee:

- I would be honored to earn your endorsement. I have helped lead substantial change in accountability, school finance, discipline, and compensation. All while battling the

Trump administration and now some aggressive political operatives trying to vilify me and the need for age appropriate, medically accurate sexual health education. And honestly, everything we achieved was as a team. I take no singular credit for any of it. I know how to lead with our Democratic values, build strong teams, advance meaningful policy, and get it funded.

- We have much work to do and I hope to earn your support.