



Congratulations on your candidacy for the Arizona State Legislature. Stand for Children is a non-partisan, non-profit education advocacy organization. Our mission is to ensure all Arizona students graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, college and career opportunities. We do this by educating and empowering community members, advocating for effective policies, ensuring strong policy implementation, and supporting courageous leaders at the ballot box.

In the 2018 election cycle, Stand for Children will consider endorsing candidates aligned with our mission and current policy priorities. In the questionnaire below please provide responses indicating your position on our key focus areas. Please limit your overall responses to 6 pages.

Thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives and preferences regarding public education.

#### CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Candidate's Name: Cesar Chavez

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District (LD): 29

Party Affiliation: Democratic

E-Mail Address(es): cesarchavezaz@gmail.com

Phone: (623) 738-6398

Alternate Campaign Contact: N/A

Campaign Website: cesarchavezarizona.com

Education (Please note highest degree achieved):

Previous Elected Office(s) Held: Current State Representative for legislative district 29

Current Profession: Owner of Communications firm

Please describe why you are qualified for the office sought:

My voting record can vouch for why I am qualified for the office I am seeking. As a State Representative I have stood up for education as a whole and not only sided with traditional or charter schools. At the end of the day, we are to represent all students and educators.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are your top three priorities for public education in Arizona?

- Funding (teacher salaries & per-pupil)
- Re-visit state standard curriculum
- Support target funding programs

2. What state policy change(s) do you believe could allow more Arizona children attend a quality school, be taught by an effective teacher and be provided with opportunities to succeed?

In hopes that vouchers get repealed, we can dedicate that funding towards funding education.

3. What role should the state play in holding schools accountable for student academic growth and achievement?

I understand the need to provide school districts and their schools autonomy. However, the state needs to have oversight of operations and finance structures. It is important that we can hold them accountable for the sake of our children. We must also hold charter schools up to the same standard as traditional school districts.

Currently, Stand for Children Arizona is focused on several policy areas: Early Literacy and Grade-Level Reading, English Language Instruction and School Finance. The following questions address those priorities.

#### Early Literacy & Grade-Level Reading

Based on the Spring 2017 statewide assessment, 56% of Arizona students cannot read on grade-level by the end of third grade, meaning only 44% of students are reading on grade-level. Scores have improved overall, but with the statewide goal of 72% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders reading on grade-level by 2030, we have a long way to go. When looking at the data by school and region, it shows the improvement is concentrated in a small percentage of schools while many Arizona schools struggle to increase students' reading ability (see attached data sheet). Reading proficiency at this point in a student's academic career is vitally important. Research shows failure to read proficiently by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is linked to ongoing academic struggles, failure to graduate high school on time, and it dramatically reduces and creates barriers to entry into a postsecondary institution or career opportunities.

4. Would you support providing targeted funding and evidence-based programs, such as reading coaches and summer school, to improve the reading proficiency of Arizona students?

Yes. It is because of these targeted funding programs that we can provide students with extra learning opportunities.

5. Would you support state funding for early learning opportunities such as full-day kindergarten or quality pre-school for 3 and 4-year olds?

Yes. Learning at an early age can only lead to greater growth.

### English Language Learners (ELL)

Current state policies regarding ELL students were adopted in response to a lawsuit and limited by voter-protected requirements. They have been in place for 12 years. These policies use a one-size fits all approach, unlike any other education policy. During the 2018 legislative session, Stand moved H.B. 2435 through the process. The bill allowed for flexibility at the local level while preserving voter mandates and it provided for needed transparency and accountability. HB 2435 passed unanimously out of the House and Senate Education committees. Unfortunately, the bill failed to get a final vote in the last days of the session as time ran out.

6. Would you support legislation similar to HB 2435 to change current ELL instructional requirements in order to provide local flexibility, increased accountability and transparency and more efficient use of funds?

Students do not learn on a “cookie-cutter” approach. Teachers must have the ability to tailor their teachings to fit each child individually. Yes, I would support legislation like HB2435 and did vote for it in the House.

7. Would you sign a pledge to support similar legislation, if elected?

Yes

8. If not, what policies would you support to improve ELL instruction?

N/A

## School Finance

Arizona's current school finance system is over 30 years old. It was designed to support local school districts funded by their taxpayers with the state providing what could not be raised locally. Since that time, Arizona's public-school system has expanded to include a myriad of choices: open enrollment, charter schools and Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs); many students don't attend their local community school. The current system is outdated and continues to increase reliance on state funding. State policies which continue to limit the ability to raise revenue have resulted in the chronic underfunding of public schools. Short-term solutions and targeted investments fail to address the underlying problem. Stand for Children advocates for sufficient funding for all Arizona students, regardless of where they live or what type of school they attend.

9. What would you do or support to increase public school funding to at least the national average?

Education needs to be looked at as a preparation for our future workforce.

Unfortunately, due to the cuts made eight years ago, we are starting to see a huge gap in qualified individuals to fill some of these jobs. Besides funding our education, let's look at how districts and charters are spending their moneys and if it is being done adequately.

10. How do you plan to grow state revenue, establish new revenue sources and provide additional resources for education?

We need to look at the budget in its entirety and determine what can be removed to fund additional resources for education. Another source is to determine which tax credits are and aren't being used and if it is in Arizona's best interest to continue providing it.

Below, please include any additional information you believe Stand for Children should know about your priorities: