

Omaha Education Association-Children's Action Fund Recommends Heath Mello for Mayor

Association leader says decisions the city makes "affect our students and our members"

Omaha – A record of strong support for public schools and children as well as a commitment to work collaboratively with educators and school officials has earned mayoral candidate Heath Mello the recommendation of the Omaha Education Association-Children's Action Fund (OEA-CAF), according to OEA President Bridget Donovan.

The unanimous vote to recommend Mello came after a team of Association members conducted interviews with Heath Mello and Jean Stothert and reviewed their written answers to a questionnaire regarding the candidates' support for children, public education and education employees, said Donovan.

"OEA-CAF found that Heath Mello emerged as the candidate most aligned with the stated mission of our Association and the interests of our members," said Donovan. "Mello has a very holistic view of the city and the office of the mayor and intends to use that office to bring collaboration and consensus. We are confident that Mello's proactive desire to engage and support OPS teachers and students would well-serve our community."

Donovan said the OEA decided to become involved in the mayor's race because "the decisions the city makes affect our students and our members."

Donovan cited developing strong community and business partnerships and the School Resource Officer (SRO) program as areas of mutual interest. Both the city and the school district contribute to the SRO program that is intended to bring Omaha police officers into schools to engage students on the positive front. Donovan said Mello also supports and will work to cultivate school, community and business partnerships that will benefit students and the city's economy.

"Heath Mello is a strong leader who is committed to fostering and supporting school partnerships with employers, civic groups, our Association, and other public and private sector organizations, to build on school-to-work and other programs that help our students develop the skills needed for the competitive job market while making their educational experience relevant to the world they will experience as adults," said Donovan.

Donovan said Mello's vision "very much aligns with the mission and goals of the OEA in advocating for robust public education for children in our community."

"He is opposed to siphoning public tax dollars to fund voucher and charter school schemes. He supports collaboration and he unequivocally supports collective bargaining," Donovan said. "Mello has been a strong advocate for teachers and has established channels for these key education stakeholders to provide advice and input. He is proactive, seeking engagement and problem-solving as opposed to waiting for issues to present themselves before starting conversation."

The OEA-CAF's recommendation process included extending invitations to Mello and Stothert to respond to a written questionnaire and participate in an interview with the committee. An invitation to join the interview team was extended to OEA-CAF's full membership. The candidates were ranked separately after the committee reviewed their written questionnaires and interviewed the candidates. The committee's vote to recommend Heath Mello for Mayor was unanimous.

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