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## Page 2: Contact Information

## Q1

Please provide your contact information below.

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## Page 3: Question 1: Early Learning

## Q2

Virginia is known to have a 'non-system' of early learning where programs operate under different departments and sets of rules. What would you do to better link programs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Virginia's early learning programs?

Early learning is a critical component of the educational process and I have long been a proponent of increased funding to expand early learning in Virginia. However, for these efforts to be effective, they must be coordinated and mutually supportive. I support increasing this coordination at the state level, while recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach would not be in the best interests of our children. While fully funded pre-K is the best approach, there are other creative ways to help better prepare children for entry into school. One such program is "Bridge to Kindergarten," which was implemented in Fairfax County on a trial basis. This short program before entry into elementary school teaches basic executive functioning skills that are essential to success. I introduced a budget amendment to allow for the expansion of this program using left over pre-K funding. While not successful, I still believe that it represents an opportunity to move forward in this area. In addition to the above, Virginia and the nation as a whole need to more effectively tackle the issue of the "fade-out" effect of the benefits of pre-school. While the benefits are well documented, their impact often fades-out before the end of elementary school. This is an issue that I am keenly interested in and have been working on as Governor McAuliffe's appointee to the Southern Regional Education Board Legislative Advisory Committee.

## Page 4: Question 2: Foster Care

Q3

**Most children entering foster care are returned to their families. In most cases, these families do not receive additional support and services from the child welfare system, which can lead to poor health and education outcomes for children. How do you think the Commonwealth can better support children once they are returned to their families?**

I have long been supportive of the Governor's efforts to expand Medicaid in Virginia, so that over 400,000 Virginians, including families with children who have been in the foster system, can receive quality affordable healthcare regardless of their income. While the future of Medicaid expansion is currently in doubt due to federal action, I will continue to voice my strong support for expanding Medicaid as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Additionally, as a long-time member of the House Education Committee, I have been an advocate for increased funding for public schools around the Commonwealth, SOL reform that reduces reliance on high-stakes end-of-the-year testing and increases the focus on genuine learning, and ensuring equal access to programs and resources that help students thrive.

Page 5: Question 3: School to Prison Pipeline

Q4

**The US Department of Education data analyzed by the Center for Public Integrity shows that Virginia schools, in a single year, referred students to law enforcement agencies at three times the national rate. Numerous studies show that these school discipline policies increase the chances of these students becoming involved with the adult criminal justice system. If elected, how would you address these issues?**

I believe it is important to ensure that teachers and administrators have the opportunity to help students to learn from their mistakes rather than employ a one-size-fits-all approach that automatically leads to suspension or expulsion. At the same time, it is also important to ensure that schools are able to effectively respond to disciplinary issues that affect the learning environment of other students. As a member of the Education Committee, I was a strong proponent of successful changes to the Code of Virginia that made it clear that school districts did not have to abide by a "zero tolerance" standard for several issues where the offense was inadvertent or accidental. I was also pleased to support Delegate Bagby's HB1924, which directs the Board of Education to develop guidelines for alternatives to short-term and long-term suspension for consideration by local school boards. I am eager to work with partners as we explore additional programs and opportunities that will keep all of our students in school and prepare them for successful, fulfilling lives.

Page 6: Question 4: Health Insurance

## Q5

**Virginia's Children's Health Insurance Program (known as FAMIS in Virginia) and Medicaid provide low-income children with health insurance that their families would otherwise be unable to afford. If the federal government cuts payments to the states for Medicaid and/or FAMIS, how would you support the health needs of low-income children?**

I am deeply troubled by the prospect that funding for programs currently operating in Virginia (Medicaid and FAMIS) could be in jeopardy. The latest estimate from the Department of Medical Assistance Services is that under the proposed healthcare legislation making its way through Congress, Virginia could stand to lose \$1.4 billion over the next seven years, a loss that would be very difficult to cover in Virginia. While I am strongly opposed to the proposed changes to Medicaid and to Congress' neglect of CHIP re-authorization, should these changes come into affect and leave Virginia with a budget hole to fill, I support doing what we can to ensure that Virginia continues to provide as high-quality care as possible to as many people as possible. While I have not reviewed specific proposals, and do not anticipate doing so until it is clear that we will in fact have budget shortfalls, I would be willing to entertain proposals to both provide more flexibility to state agencies so that they can administer their programs in as cost-efficient a way as possible (if such solutions exist) and to consider identifying additional sources of revenue.

## Page 7: Question 5: Opioid Epidemic

## Q6

**Substance abuse by parents affects both the parents and their children. Brain research shows that positive attachment between a parent and child in the first few years of life is critical to the child's healthy brain development. Substance abuse can significantly impact those early bonds between parents and children. If elected, what policy solutions would you promote to address the needs of the whole family?**

There are two aspects to this issue -- how to help those with addiction and how to keep addiction from occurring in the first place. With regard to helping those with addiction, the single greatest step that the General Assembly can and should take is to expand Medicaid and allow enrollees to access drug treatment programs and facilities throughout Virginia. In addition to expanding Medicaid, I also supported multiple efforts in 2017 to specifically address the opioid epidemic. These bills included proactive steps such as limits on prescriptions on substances containing opioids and better training doctors on managing opioid prescriptions. Reactive steps included allowing a pharmacist to dispense naloxone in the absence of a patient-specific prescription pursuant to a standing order of the Commissioner of Health. Finally, substance abuse prevention starts with better educating our youth and creating peer pressure to not engage in substance abuse in the first place. As a member of the Joint Commission on Health Care, I supported efforts to expand the mission of the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to include the reduction and prevention of substance use by youth. I was pleased that this passed as HB1751, but believe this and similar programs must have significantly increased resources to be more effective.

## Page 8: Question 6: Cross-Systems

## Q7

**A child can interact with many systems (schools, health and mental health, courts, etc.) as they grow up. A Virginia Children's Cabinet has been established to facilitate cross-agency collaborations at the highest levels of state government. If elected, how would you facilitate this type of cross-agency collaboration for children?**

I strongly support the work of the Virginia Children's Cabinet. The most immediate task is to ensure that the next administration shares in this support and continues the good work of the Cabinet. As a member of the Education and General Laws committees I look forward to working with the next administration to implement any legislative or budgetary recommendations.

## Page 9: Question 7: Mental Health

Q8

In 2016, Virginia ranked 49th in the nation for the rate of youth with major depression who did not receive any mental health treatment. There are many barriers to quality mental health treatment for children, including: type of insurance, place of residence, lack of access and stigma. What do you view as the most significant barrier to effective mental health care for children and adolescents in Virginia, and how would you propose addressing this barrier?

As I mentioned previously, I believe that the decision to not expand Medicaid has done a great disservice to Virginia. One of the reasons is that expansion would increase the number of youth who have access to mental health treatment. That said, I am pleased that Virginia's last budget increased funding for mental health services in general by over \$30 million. Additionally, I have long been concerned about the limited availability of mental health providers in parts of Virginia. I was proud to support SB369 in 2016 that took steps to expand telehealth pilot programs at several universities in Virginia, and I am hopeful that if those trials go well, telehealth programs can begin to be expanded dramatically throughout the state to ensure all Virginians can access mental health treatment.

## Page 10: Question 8: Education

Q9

The achievement gap between lower income students and their higher income peers and between white students and students of color has been a persistent problem in Virginia that has recently worsened. How would you address the achievement gap in Pre-K to 12 education?

As a proud parent of three children who attend or attended Fairfax County Public Schools, I understand the value that public education can provide to all children, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, or background. In particular, I believe it is critical that we invest in pre-K programs. I am also a strong believer in after-school enrichment programs, both as a way for students to explore potential career pathways but also as a way to foster a supportive environment without negative peer pressure. Finally, it is essential that all students believe that they will have an opportunity to use their education to succeed, which means investing in job creation and workforce development in economically stressed areas of the Commonwealth. That is why I sponsored HB1552 this past year, which makes information about career and technical education programs more available and accessible to students and their parents. I was also proud to co-sponsor HB2395 this past year, which required school boards to have at least one reading specialist on staff who is able to help students with reading disorders, especially dyslexia. As a member of the House Education Committee and the Southern Regional Education Board Legislative Advisory Committee I look forward to working with Voices for Virginia's Children and other organizations to reduce and eventually eliminate this achievement gap.