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Page 2: Contact Information

Q1

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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?

As a delegate, I would advocate to bring early learning programs together under a single organizational entity that would standardized operational procedures and ensure a consistent application of learning standards. Bringing the disparate programs together under one entity would create efficiencies, which would result in more being made available to directly help children.

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?

When I was 16-years old, me and my youngest brother moved from Richmond, VA to Tahlequah, OK to live with foster parents. This was one of the best experiences of my life and opened new avenues of opportunities that I would not have received at the United Methodist Children's Home or living in Rockbridge County, VA. While I had love, support, and guidance as I graduated from high school and then college, many of my peers still living at the Children's Home where merely giving the "release papers" at 18-years old and sent on their way. 40-years later, many of those individuals still struggle to make ends meet, did not go to college, and have limited or no access to healthcare. To avoid a similar fate for foster children, we must ensure that children and families have the right environment and conflict resolution tools to develop a healthy family environment. We must also provide children and families with the information necessary to pursue educational opportunities.

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?

Too many school infractions are too quickly referred to the police instead of having the issues addressed by teachers, counselors, and principals. We need to provide sufficient personnel, training, and resources to allow the schools to handle non-criminal activities internally. School should be a place of learning and provide an environment for students to grow, understand the consequences of their actions, and be mentored to become contributing members of society. If elected, I will work to return a community "feel" to our schools and change laws to provide for more in-school counseling and minimize referrals to the police.

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?

In the event the Federal Government cuts payments to Medicaid and/or FAMIS, I will work with delegates from both parties and all regions of Virginia to establish funding and a minimum level healthcare service. As a poor child growing up in the mountains of Virginia, I know first-hand the impact of not having access to affordable healthcare. In today's society, where we are the wealthiest country in the world, basic health care needs to be considered a right and not just a privilege of those who can afford it.

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?

We need to continue the work already begun to provide family assessment services and assist families impacted opioid use during by in utero development. Like many previous drug-related child development issues of the past, we must accept that the use and misuse of opioids during development affects the health and well-being of both the unborn child and the mother. Our healthcare system needs to be equipped to help both the immediate and the unintended victims of this epidemic.

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?

If elected, I would continue to support the Children's Cabinet and their initiatives on "Classrooms not Courtrooms." We must also ensure there is a free flow of data between agencies to guarantee that care is provided with the most current data available.

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?

One of the key initiatives to overcome the stigma associated with mental health issues is to increase training and education for all adults that come into contact with children through their official capacities. These individuals are best positioned to recognize the indicators that someone may need additional support.

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?

To address the achievement gap in Pre-K thru 12, we need to have a concerted plan to support Full Day Kindergarten in Loudoun County and the two other jurisdictions in Virginia that still do not offer FDK. We then need to identify how and where we can best apply support to “at risk” communities for early childhood and family development. Data-driven analysis has proven that an investment in early childhood development makes a significant positive impact on the child’s early school development and reduces the long-term juvenile and adult incarceration rates.