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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?

Centralizing early childhood education programs under one roof will be ideal. Our schools are already overcrowded. We need to establish statewide leadership on early learning and work with the federal government and non-profits to bring more early childhood education programs as Early Head Start and Head Start to Virginia. I am also a supporter of pre-school 0-4 years old, because it is never too early to put our children on the right path to learning. Statistics show that children's brain absorbs more information from 0 to 3. Therefore, we should be investing in our children. However, I still foresee early childhood education programs work with the public school system with special education, for instance.

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?

It is important for elected officials to work with local governments and their corresponding department of social services to follow-up with foster families about the children's progress. This will be a strong first step to hold local governments accountable. After that, we need to create programs that will help parents create stronger support systems for their children. This way, children can grow into a stable family environment and form stable families when they grow up.

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?

The challenge with the schools addressing problems of "school-to-prison-pipeline" is that we do not have the staff or resources to help children who are in need to the level we can. As a social worker, I work with families, some whose kids who have run afoul, because they did not get the help they needed. We need to invest in our schools, and fund the staffing who can work with them, such as guidance counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Unfortunately, anytime we have a budget cut for schools, this is the field that it is most affected and we shouldn't.

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?

Working in the human services field, I see every day the problems when families do not have access to the healthcare and the social services that they need. I will work to expand Medicaid in Virginia and if possible have a single payer system, so not only children in need would be covered, but all children will have access to these services anyway. If Medicaid for all is approved, we can also use the tax dollars that are going away and reinvest that in helping local governments address social services associated with subsidies.

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?

As a social worker, I understand the need of the families affected by substance abuse. We first need to help parents with their addiction and withdrawal effects. We should be working with the federal government and get as much help and grant money that we can combat the Opioid epidemic. We need to have more programs approved and certified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which these grants and public funds will help with. This grant money should come to the state and then given to localities for accountability purposes.

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?

Childrens' and their families' experience navigating our systems should be smoother. I will support cross-system collaboration including a one-time application that could be used to apply to all type of services. Families in need should be able to get to the services they need in a timely manner. If elected, I would like to spend time in localities and with families in need to satisfaction and proper cooperation and cross collaboration among agencies.

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?

Funding is the most significant barrier. Each school in Virginia should have one or more guidance counselors, social workers, and psychologists depending on the amount of students. We need to have a ratio. These individuals could ensure timely diagnoses and training for parents, so parents could become a support system for their children. We also need more special education classrooms, so special education children could actually learn. We also need to continue a public conversation to raise awareness for mental health issues. As we raise awareness for children who deal with mental illness, we can learn how to better address it not just in the healthcare system, but also in our schools and foster care system.

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 mother of children of color, I witnessed how my children were viewed differently in the system, and I see as a social worker when inequality of education leads to some groups of students to do better, and others to be left behind. As a delegate, I will fight to keep and invest money in our public schools, so they become more inclusive, but also culturally sensitive of the issues of different communities, rather than invest in charter schools or school vouchers to private schools. We should never let the taxpayer dollar be used for anything other than the public good, and never subsidize the needs of the wealthy. Public service is about giving everyone an even playing field to achieve their goals and dreams, and I will be a fighter for all students to ensure they get the education promised in a public school.