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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?

There are countless studies that have proven a quality, early education can create the foundation children need to have success long-term in school. This is why I am a strong supporter and advocate for Pre-K and access to full-day Kindergarten to ensure our children are being given everything they need to succeed. This means putting more funding in our education system and taking a comprehensive look at the system as a whole to determine what the most efficient and effective learning programs and techniques are, and execute them.

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?

As a former counselor for children in foster care, I have seen first-hand the short comings that the child welfare system has in terms of providing additional support and services. As Delegate, I plan to make this issue a passion project of mine, and fight for more resources, such as wraparound services that support for children and families, to ensure they stay healthy and are provided with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

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 school to prison pipeline is a serious problem that we can't ignore. As Delegate, I would like to address this problem by supporting prevention policies that focus more on family and community-based programs. We also need to clarify the difference in court referrals for kids who need help with behavior vs. kids who are putting the safety of others at risk. Above all else, we need to invest more in our education system to ensure we recruit the top teachers and staff who are trained to connect and provide a world class education and after-school activities that equip our kids with the tools needed to succeed and thrive.

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?

Providing access to affordable healthcare to low income children and families has to be one of Virginia's top priorities. As Delegate, I am committed to protecting Medicaid and fighting to expand it to ensure we cover even more Virginians. Additionally, I support an extension of CHIP to maintain federal matching funds so that an affordable insurance option is provided to children of low-income working families.

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?

The opioid crisis in Virginia is a real problem that we must address in the General Assembly. A lot was done in Richmond this last session such as pushes to limit emergency room prescriptions of opioid painkillers to 3 days' worth and increasing funding for studying the effects of utero exposure to opioids, but there is still a lot more to be done. As Delegate one policy I will look to promote is ensuring treatment centers that consider the needs of the whole family. This will allow us to treat addiction to opioids as a disease rather than a crime so that families are not torn apart by this terrible crisis.

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?

Establishing the Virginia Children's Cabinet has been a huge step in the right direction towards the goal of cross-agency collaboration for children. The benefits of a multi-disciplinary approach and providing more wraparound services are crucial to our children's success. Therefore, we must continue to prioritize collaboration and communication between all agencies to ensure we are maximizing the resources we have and providing efficient and effective services to our children.

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?

It is unacceptable that Virginia is ranking 49th in the nation for the rate of youth with major depression who do not receive treatment. I strongly believe the biggest barrier in our state is the lack of understanding that leads to a lack in access to treatment. We need to educate lawmakers and the public on the early warning signs of depression and eliminate the stigma to increase the access to mental health treatment for all children in Virginia.

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?

Increasing education funding and decreasing class size are two major steps we must take to close the achievement gap for all students. I also believe for minority-student achievement, educators need a knowledge of student culture as a foundation for building relationships with students and better understanding their needs to succeed in school. Finally, we have to provide all children, no matter where they live, access to Pre-K and Full-Day Kindergarten to ensure a strong start to their education.