

**COMPLETE**

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)  
Started: Friday, July 14, 2017 3:54:12 PM  
Last Modified: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 11:40:48 AM  
Time Spent: Over a week  
IP Address: 68.106.155.147

## Page 2: Contact Information

Q1

Please provide your contact information below.

Name	Kelly DeLucia
Address	PO Box 1796
City/Town	Yorktown
State/Province	VA
ZIP/Postal Code	23692
Email Address	kellyforva@gmail.com
Phone Number	(757) 872-7580

## 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?

We have to take our efforts toward early learning beyond the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Head Start models. This begins by creating and funding a universal Pre-K system available to every 4 year old in the state. Every child in Virginia should have access to Pre-K due to the enormous influence this early learning experience has on a child's educational trajectory and so that these students begin Kindergarten on a level playing field. We cannot continue to educate our children on an ad-hoc, as-available system that is already overburdened. As delegate, I will introduce and support legislation that creates this system.

In the meantime, we must help those programs fighting the good fight coordinate and maximize the service they are providing for Virginia's children. Currently, the VPI distributes a set of guidelines under which an organization must meet and maintain certain standards in order to receive state grants funding early learning--and while much of this list is progressive and thorough, we should take time to enhance its specificity and actionability in order to keep partnering organizations accountable. Additionally, funds must be maintained and (perhaps) increased for VPI staff to follow up and ensure that partnering organizations are continuing to follow protocol.

## 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?

What often goes unmentioned in discussions around welfare is that the largest beneficiary group of these programs in our state is children. Children who enter the foster care system, and perhaps later return to their families, are at a particular risk of instability that can lead to hunger and educational disruption. It makes sense to extend qualification of many programs (food stamps, the School Nutrition Program, etc) to include families who have recently had their child returned to them--this can help provide a level of food security for these children they may not otherwise have access to.

---

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?

Recently a constituent showed me an Infraction Notice sent home with her 1st grader regarding an incident she had been involved in. The half page form included columns of classifications such as Kidnapping, Arson, Assault & Battery, Extortion, Inciting a Riot. These categorizations imply and impose upon kids a level of intent that is wholly inappropriate for their age and developmental stage. It is an example of the way our system has run off course in the way we see, meet, and address inappropriate behavior in school aged children. Children are not criminals--and our schools need to take this lesson to heart. We should not be escalating situations many young adults and children find themselves in to the level of criminality--which (at its most benign) can threaten their graduation, college, and job prospects, or (at its worst) can leave them with a criminal record or incarcerated. While we must take seriously threats that endanger the school population, we must be vigilant not to see nefarious intent in common schoolyard behavioral problems.

This is a complicated issue within schools but there are at least a few beginning steps we can take to start to reduce the number of children we're referring to enforcement agencies. Our front line with students is always our teachers--and we need to provide them with the tools to handle chaotic situations, including ones that threaten to be violent. We should be investing in providing teachers with de-escalation and diversity trainings that can allow them to head off many situations before they get started and know how to handle them once they have.

Police presence by way of resource officers has also historically served to escalate tensions and altercations within Virginia schools--I remember in 2015 when the 11 year old Kayleb Moon-Robinson was charged for misdemeanor disorderly conduct for kicking a trash can. This same boy, resulting from an incident just weeks later, was also charged and convicted of felony assault on an officer after he neglected to wait for other students to leave the classroom before he did (a rule just for him) and the officer physically escalated the situation. I recount this anecdote because it's an incredibly common scenario that drastically increases the rate at which normal offenses are referred as criminal action. Police presence in schools is important, but officers on this beat cannot treat students in the same way they treat adults. Training for these officers must be updated to emphasize de-escalation and enforcement by non-physical means.

---

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?

One of the primary reasons I'm running is in order to be a buffer at the state level against the harm national policies in this administration may visit upon our citizens, especially on the issue of healthcare. We cannot afford cutbacks to these programs that are so vital for children's access to healthcare--so we have to be prepared to fill in the financial gaps. I will fight in budget negotiations to make sure we are appropriating the money we need to keep these programs running.

---

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?

Part of this question relates to the above question concerning access to healthcare--folks suffering with substance abuse often find it difficult to seek effective treatment without health insurance to offset the costs of rehabilitation. This is especially true of families living under the poverty level. State and local resources for substance abuse are also often prohibitively expensive or inaccessible without insurance.

We need a multi-path solution to this dilemma. First, we should increase and improve access to and quality of state substance abuse programs available to families qualifying for Medicaid. Second, we must continue working to expand the number of people covered under affordable healthcare so that they might access good treatment options. Third, we need to work with nonprofit and outside organizations to continue and expand the work they're already doing within their communities to combat substance abuse.

---

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?

Database and information coordination is difficult, particularly when you're talking about integrating several information systems, but that is what is needed in order to facilitate the easy transfer of information between governmental departments. Governmental information systems (and the technology that accompany them) across the nation are in dire need of updating and Virginia is no exception. While we can't overhaul the government's technology, we can focus in on the departments that need it the most, those that deal primarily and heavily with 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?

I think this is most often an issue of access--whether that is because the child does not live in the vicinity of a doctor who can treat them (one doesn't exist or none are in their network) or because the insurance they are covered under does not cover mental health services. This strikes at the heart of a lack of quality affordable healthcare available to Virginians, especially children.

No child should have to go without treatment. While I will fight to continue expanding insurance coverage across the state, and improve the quality of plans available, we also need to increase mental health resources where we know kids are going to be--their schools. Not only can we not afford to continue cutting invaluable counselor positions in schools, we have to invest in these resources.

---

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?

First, we must acknowledge that our current model of intensive testing and rigid curriculum in the SOQ has not significantly narrowed the achievement gap. This is in large part because it makes enormous demands upon both students and teachers without taking into consideration the many contextual factors that lead to historic and persistent lower performance. In order to address this issue, we have to face two facts: we are not providing adequate solutions to the outside problems that inhibit student performance in the classroom and we are not providing teachers in academically struggling areas with the pay or professional development to encourage success.

A poor student who does not have a quiet place to do homework, or is not getting enough to eat, or is overwhelmed with worries about home, has a high likelihood of displaying difficulties in the classroom. We can't improve performance until we create a system that can address these issues--we must invest in finding and codifying solutions that work for each locality's needs.

It's unsurprising that underpaid, overworked, underserved teachers, despite doing everything they can, would find it difficult to overcome the obstacles placed in front of them. Beyond simply paying our teachers more for their work, which is an imperative, we must also provide them with continuing professional development that allows them to grow in their careers and find creative solutions to close achievement gaps in their classroom.