

**COMPLETE**

**Collector:** Web Link 1 (Web Link)  
**Started:** Saturday, July 15, 2017 11:22:29 AM  
**Last Modified:** Saturday, July 15, 2017 11:55:36 AM  
**Time Spent:** 00:33:07  
**IP Address:** 96.225.156.18

## 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?

If all departments had one effort under the Department of Education then the programs could work together to be cohesive and work towards a common goal. A reorganization needs to be done, so the Department of Education can be the umbrella for early learning programs, like Head Start, etc. When the Dept. of Education is responsible for Early Learning programs, there will need to be more precise planning to organize, but the first step is to put the Dept. of Education in the driver's seat.

## 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?

There needs to be a program that, not only tracks children while in the foster system, but assists families that have once had their children in foster care, in an effort to ensure they do not ever have the need to enter the foster care system again. Supporting families will be our best prevention.

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 would foster advocacy from the public school systems, with the focus on prevention. I look to the professionals currently in the public school system to advise on best approaches.

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?

If FAMIS is no longer available, it will be on Virginia to take care of our children. There is no doubt that Virginia will need to prioritize to focus on children-healthcare and education, which are 2 of my main priorities as a Delegate. I will seek advisement from policy and budget specialists on best approaches to achieve the goal of putting families first, specifically education and healthcare.

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?

Virginia needs to have a holistic approach. We need to support families, in order for children to maximize their potential. If a parent has a substance abuse issue, we need to provide the help that parent needs in order to get the whole family back to a healthy functioning life. In the end, helping the parent IS helping the child be successful.

## 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?

When I am delegate, one of the first things I would do would be to get with the Virginia Children's Cabinet to seek their advisement on best approach. I will utilize the advocates to come up with a long term plan that factors in the whole family and strives to be inclusive of all aspects of the public support system.

## 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?

Access to Healthcare seems to be the main factor inhibiting youth from receiving mental health treatment. Medicaid was not expanded in our state and with the current healthcare debate in Washington, the future of healthcare in Virginia is unknown. Healthcare is one of my main priorities and I will work with all Delegates to ensure the health and lives of our Virginia children are a priority with policy and budget.

## 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 former public school teacher, I can first hand say that the achievement gap is a difficult one to close. Teachers work to identify strategies that will close the gap. As a third grade teacher teaching children during their first year taking SOLS, I worked directly with my colleagues to identify strategies to help the targeted children that struggled to achieve (most of the students that struggled were African American males). Teachers can only work very specifically with the children that needed help, but the bigger picture needs to be better addressed. We need to help families so that they can earn more and get themselves out of poverty. Training and education will help people get better jobs and jobs need to pay more to their employees. Lifting families out of poverty will create a situation where the children can achieve more in school and then, themselves be able to succeed in the future. The cycle of low income families staying in low income situations needs to be broken. There is a holistic approach to closing achievement gaps and I will be a fighter for this holistic approach when I am a Delegate.