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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?

We must invest in and expand preschool initiatives across the state and I will continue to support these efforts as a member of the Education Committee. I will work with localities to determine how we can best support them in their efforts to expand these programs and better increase school achievement across the board. Not only are students impacted positively by these programs; parents are likewise given a head start. I look forward to this being a bi-partisan effort.

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?

The Commonwealth has a responsibility to ensure that reunited families have the support and resources they need to be successful. I support increased state assistance via Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for these families. The state should also be willing to partner with non-profit organizations that help these families to navigate the system and identify community resources. I will work with these groups to devise strategies that will have a more positive impact in the long run.

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 started working on these issues the moment I was elected to the House of Delegates. This year, my bill directing the Board of Education to develop alternatives to school suspension was signed by the Governor and marks an important first step in closing the school to prison pipeline. If re-elected, I will continue to introduce and support legislation to reform how student discipline is conducted in our schools. I will also work with school districts, law-enforcement agencies, and child advocacy groups to ensure we achieve meaningful and effective reforms.

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?

I will work to limit the adverse effects that any cuts in federal funding for Medicaid and/or FAMIS here in the Commonwealth. I will also work to bring together local non-profit organizations and health care providers to develop and implement strategies to ensure the health needs of our most vulnerable populations are met. As a former member of the Capital Area Network, I support increases in state support for medical facilities that provide pediatric medical care, dental care and behavioral health services to medium and low income 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?

As Former chair of the Too Smart to Start, I have been committed to supporting families struggling with substance abuse. I have been a champion of the efforts of the McShin Foundation and other organizations that are committed to not only promoting the passage of legislation but also to providing preventative services and treatment for individuals and families. During my next term, I will be focused on providing resources for local drug courts and individuals that are convicted of a crime because of their substance abuse. One of the main challenges that individuals that have been convicted of crimes due to substance abuse have shared with me is the lack of support once they are released from the correctional facility. This is where I believe we can not only address issues associated with substance abuse but it would significantly impact our challenges with recidivism and cycles of poverty.

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?

There have been many collaborative groups created to address challenges that impact children in Virginia. I have and will continue to support the education compact in the City of Richmond, the Too Smart to Start Coalition in Henrico, and the Virginia Children's Cabinet. I currently serve on the Joint Committee to Study the Future of Public Elementary and Secondary Education in the Commonwealth and the Revisions to the SOQs, SOLs, and SOAs Subcommittee, where we are working to address these concerns and bolster our public education system. I will continue to serve as a liaison between our communities, the legislature, and other government 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?

The state should provide greater assistance to local Community Services Boards and Behavioral Health Authorities, who are on the front lines when it comes to providing mental health treatment in their regions. Funds can be used to reduce the waiting list for Intellectual/Developmental Disability waivers so that these individuals and families can receive more immediate care. For years, I have been a strong advocate for effective treatment programs for children who experience a mental illness. I will continue these advocacy efforts if re-elected.

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 begin to close the achievement gap in Pre-K to 12 education, we must begin to close the income gap. I support raising the minimum wage, efforts to strengthen local Offices of Community Wealth Building, and expanding job training opportunities across the Commonwealth. I will continue to support efforts to expand after-school and summer programs that have a positive impact on low-income students. Additionally, as mentioned before, we must continue to invest in and expand preschool initiatives across the state and I will continue to support these efforts as a member of the Education Committee.