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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?

I don't see a problem with Virginia having an array of Early Learning programs. This gives parents options. What all of these programs should have in common is preparing children to enter school, providing proper supervision, as well as nutrition while parents are working. These guidelines should be required of all early learning programs, with guidelines and requirements set by the State of Virginia.

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 foster parent and CASA volunteer I have personally experienced children aging out of care, and returned to their parents as well. When children return home, it is important that causing factors for displacement have been addressed. Parents, especially the poor, are struggling, may at times battle drug addiction, and may lack coping and parenting skills

I believe the State needs to follow up on families and children when they return home or age out of foster care, and services need to be available for them such as public assistance, parenting classes, housing and job placement assistance.

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?

When students disrupt, act out, and hurt other students it can be difficult for schools to know how to respond. This is when guidance counselors, parents, and teachers should meet to discuss a plan of action. Many localities operate special schools for children that will not behave in a regular school setting. When suspension doesn't work, this is one alternative. When youth are involved, referral to law enforcement should be a last option.

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?

The Federal Government is the issuer of currency, not States. This means that the federal government should be the one to address health care needs. Though we may be able to fund the program on a State level, it places a burden on the State that we should not have to sustain. Raising State taxes to pay for everything that the Federal Government once paid for has placed many States near bankruptcy. However, I believe that even a State system of single payer or Medicaid type coverage for all beyond a certain income bracket would ultimately save the State money, and help Virginians, especially children, live a more fulfilling life.

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?

I believe that drug rehabilitation must be the first priority in these situations. Children should be placed into the care of relatives whenever possible, instead of foster care. Our efforts must go toward rehabilitating families, and giving them the tools they need to succeed.

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?

I am not certain which agencies are being connected under this Cabinet. I would assume that Human Services would play a large role, as well as the courts and school systems. I believe any cabinet organized for the purpose of increasing collaboration between systems would need a detailed set of bylaws that determine how and when to make the necessary referrals, and expedite them to the different agencies.

I believe that giving Court Appointed Advocates more decision making power could help as well. Currently, courts treat CASA differently, depending on the judge. In one county they may be ignored, while in another they are well respected and appreciated. As private citizens that operate on a volunteer basis, these individuals examine every aspect of the situation and make recommendations based on the best interests of the child.

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?

Our healthcare system in America is in shambles. The focus of lawmakers has been to provide subsidies to private health insurance companies, who in turn offer substandard service while banking millions upon millions in profits. The goal has not been to meet public purpose, but to increase private profit. I believe we must look to other nations with a single payer system, and emulate what they have. The argument that we cannot afford it is bogus, as studies repeatedly show that a single payer, cradle to grave system of coverage, focused on prevention, would save our country trillions of dollars.

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?

There is no single reason why students that are wealthy and white outperform their peers. As a working class father, I know that the stress of financial problems, unstable housing situations, and unemployment in the family can affect school performance. A child with a more secure home life will generally perform better in school. Fixing the achievement gap can only be accomplished by fixing the inequality gap in America, and relieving some burden off of families who are stressed.