

**COMPLETE**

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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 am not aware of this issue. As such, I will need some time to further research this and am willing to discuss this with anyone willing.

## 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?**

First, we need to ensure that the families are earning living wages so that they are able to support their families. I've proposed increasing the minimum wage to \$26/hr for businesses that make more than \$2 million in profits annually. This bill will also penalize those companies that refuse by requiring them to pay 25% of their profits each year to the state to cover the costs of public assistance services their workers will need (TANF, SNAP, etc.).

Second, with about 40% of the current job market set to disappear thanks to automation, it's important for us to implement a Universal Basic Income system so that families can maintain a basic standard of living regardless of employment status.

Third, we need to establish/expand Paid Family Leave so that parents may take time off to care for their children without fear of losing income. My proposed bill will allow people to take up to 120 days of leave and collect 75% of their regular income.

Fourth, the increased costs of living need to be contained to prevent families from being priced out into homelessness. A statewide rent control program, along with additional cost controls on utilities will greatly help with this.

Fifth, the need for universal healthcare that includes mental, dental, optical, and medical coverage is imperative.

## 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 will introduce legislation banning students from being turned over to law enforcement except for instances of serious violent crimes. This legislation would also ban long-term school suspensions and expulsions statewide.

It has been reported that some school districts (and their employees) have withheld important documentation about the behavioral health of some students. This documentation would help in reducing the likelihood of a student being turned over to law enforcement and getting them the services they need (such as IEP screenings and plans). We need to empower the Virginia Dept. of Education to investigate this issue and discipline the employees and officials that withhold this important information and/or abuse and intimidate students and their families.

Source: <http://richmondfreepress.com/news/2017/jun/24/study-finds-info-students-emotional-and-physical-d/>

## 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?

As mentioned in Question 3, a universal healthcare system needs to be implemented at the state level. This system can be funded by using the Medicaid/Medicare funds that the state receives, in combination with the "penalty" levied on companies like McDonald's and Wal-Mart if they refuse to pay their workers living wages.

## 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 expansion of harm reduction services (e.g. clean needle exchanges, nalaxone distribution, mental health counseling services, etc.) are important policy priorities.

## 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 will need some time to further research the Children's Cabinet and its functions. I'm willing to discuss this further with anyone interested.

## 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?

As mentioned in Question 4, we have instances of school districts deliberately withholding important mental health information about students that are turned over to law enforcement. My solution highlighted in that question will help address that barrier.

My proposal for Universal Healthcare will eliminate the insurance barrier to seeking mental health services as those services would be covered.

Lack of access/residence barriers can be addressed by incorporating community centers into the schools. Richmond's Huguenot High School is a good example of how that could work.

As for the stigma barrier, this will require a mass "deprogramming" of all of the divisive stereotypes about mental health issues in order to remove that barrier.

## 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, the abolition of SOLs is imperative because most students of color are likely being taught to pass the SOL test instead of being taught critical thinking and important life skills. Teachers should be in the process of unlocking a student's potential.

Second, students of color are likely children of low-income parents dealing with food security and health issues. My solutions highlighted in Question 3 will help with this because it will reduce food insecurity and possibly enable access to better quality housing.

Third, students of color are more likely to attend old school buildings with structural integrity or health issues. School buildings need to be modernized and students need access to the technology (laptops, tablets) that will encourage the closure of the achievement gap. In order to do this, the Local Composite Index will require recalculation to reflect current realities of some school districts.