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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 support a more unified approach to early childhood education, including enhanced coordination between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Services. I also support a more robust budget for the Department of Education so that it has the resources to better coordinate between local, state, and federal resources and regulations.

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?

We must continue to support children after they have left the formal foster care system and have returned to their family. I support increased resources for parenting skills education for families with returned foster children as well as increased resources for home visiting services. I also believe that it is helpful to hear directly from former foster children about how they would like to improve this experience, which is why I supported HB 1451, which directs the Department of Social Services to develop a survey to gather feedback from children aging out of foster care.

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 believe that many of the children referred to law enforcement agencies could have avoided this fate through early intervention, which is why I support increased resources for school counselors and other school staff that can identify potential issues before they arise. I support a more rehabilitation-based, versus prison-based, system so that at-risk youth can ultimately reenter society with a low risk of recidivism. In 2016, I was proud to vote for HB 487, which eliminated the requirement that School Resource Officers (SROs) "enforce school board rules and codes of student conduct," thereby urging SROs to focus more on overall safety instead of punishing children for minor, non-violent infractions.

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 the federal government cuts payments to Virginia for Medicaid and/or FAMIS, I would strongly support increasing state funding for these critical programs to ensure that we protect the health of our most vulnerable populations.

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 support insurance coverage of addiction treatment services for those battling opioid addiction, as well as mental health services for families with members fighting addiction. Additionally, I supported a number of bills this session aimed at tackling the opioid epidemic, including Del. Stolle's bill (HB1786) to initiate a plan of care and family assessment with the Department of Social Services in cases when a child has been exposed to substances in utero.

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 support this initiative, created by Governor McAuliffe through Executive Order 21, and would support codifying the existence of the Cabinet through legislation to ensure that it survives future changes in administrations.

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 believe that lack of access is one of the primary barriers to promoting mental health care for children in Virginia. We can begin to roll back this problem by recruiting more skilled mental health professionals, providing schools with more mental health resources, and ensuring that insurance companies are complying with parity laws.

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?

The achievement gap is a serious issue facing students today, and I believe that we can begin to address this problem by providing comprehensive support for students starting in preschool, including early screening for mental, physical, and social services, decreasing class sizes, and recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and support staff.