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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?

Expanded access to early childhood development is one of my top three priorities as a legislator. We now know much more about brain development and the evidence consistently points to quality early childhood education as an indicator for success throughout life. From higher incomes to lower involvement in the criminal justice system, the return on investment that society gets from early childhood development funding cannot be ignored. I would make it a priority to ensure that every young Virginian has access to quality and affordable early childhood development with corresponding standards so that children start on a more level playing field.

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 children are returned to their families, we [the Commonwealth] need to ensure that each individual child and their families are provided with a network of support. The addition of services and funds available to families and children would help combat poor health and educational services provided to children in our Commonwealth.

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?

This past session, I supported legislation to address the fact that Virginia has been ranked worst in the nation for the school-to-prison pipeline. HB 1534 and HB 1536 narrow the timeframes for long-term suspensions. While dangerous students can still be expelled, we should continue to look for alternative ways to improve student behavior and performance while keeping them in school, especially in the formative younger grades. I will continue to support legislation in favor of combating the school-to-prison pipeline.

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 have fought for Medicaid expansion since my election and believe that it is the fiscally and morally responsible decision for Virginia. I am wholly committed to affordable healthcare access for all, and should those opportunities be cut on the federal level, I will fight to close the funding gap at the state level and come up with solutions to provide for the health needs of our most vulnerable Virginians.

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 opioid epidemic has taken a major toll in Virginia. Legislation to help families and children is multifaceted. We must work to fix the opioid epidemic, and offer solutions to address family issues surrounding addiction. Many bills (HBs 1453, 1750, 1885, 2165 and 2167) were passed to address the epidemic, including measures to create a workgroup to identify resources to help substance-exposed infants, developing core competencies and standards for training health professionals, and directing the Board of Medicine to develop regulations on the prescribing of opioids.

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 think that collaboration across these agencies is critical. The needs of our children are multi-faceted, but the goal is the same: to provide opportunity and necessary resources for all of them. I am in full support of this type of teamwork and would use my influence as an elected official to facilitate the funding and liaising opportunities that best benefit the future of Virginia: its children.

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 biggest barrier remains access to affordable healthcare in general. Access to the resources people need to live healthy and fruitful lives can prove difficult for too many Virginians and their children. Increased funding for mental health services is something I have and will continue to support. Partnerships among healthcare providers and regional organizations can also help address issues that may particularly affect a certain area. We all must work together to destigmatize and do better on mental healthcare.

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?

Quality early childhood development is clearly the strongest indicator of success later in life across the board. Expanded access to that would be my top priority in addressing the achievement gap, though there are certainly additional ways to help that along as children continue through high school, including addressing the school to prison pipeline.