
Page 2: Contact Information

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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?

Virginia’s students deserve access to quality early childhood education regardless of their socioeconomic status or where they live. As Lieutenant Governor, I will work to implement universal Pre-K education for our students and increase funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. I will also advocate the coordination of rule-making and central operations for early childhood education.

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?

It is our responsibility to ensure that children in our communities are safe, including once they return home from foster care. As a Commonwealth, we can provide preventative programs to support families as a whole to help them gain parenting and communication skills, learn appropriate developmental stages, and provide wrap-around assistance to address the underlying issues that lead a family to come into contact with Child Protective Services. Currently, localities in Virginia provide these services at little to no cost to participants and have proven to be effective in reducing future incidents in families.

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?

The school-to-prison pipeline is one of the moral issues of our time and a centerpiece of my campaign. I am appalled that Virginia sends students into the criminal justice system at a higher rate than any other state. We need to be able to keep our students and staff safe and still determine appropriate punishments that do not involve the criminal justice system for in-school infractions.

To that end, I am glad that the Governor and the General Assembly worked together in the 2017 session to enact SB 829 and HB 1924, both of which direct the Board of Education to establish guidelines for alternatives to short- and long-term suspension. As Lieutenant Governor, I will work with the Board and the General Assembly to develop guidelines to adopt programs like community service, mediation, peer-to-peer counseling, and restorative justice that teach our students positive behavior rather than pulling them into incarceration and away from the communities that support them.

I also would look to advance legislation like HB 1061 proposed in 2016, which would have allowed elementary and secondary students to be expelled or referred to law enforcement only if alternatives had been considered first. Reforming our juvenile justice system is a top priority for me. I want to do away with the school-to-prison pipeline to make it a school-to-workforce 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 will fight to prevent the proposed devastating cuts to Medicaid and to expand Medicaid in Virginia under the Affordable Care Act. If Congress and the White House follow through with the worst of their threats and take away funding for vital programs such as FAMIS and Medicaid, it will be up to our leadership within the Commonwealth to offer solutions to our children and their parents. I will be unwavering in my commitment to support the basic welfare of our children. Vermont's example is a great inspiration to me; in 1989, Vermont enacted the Dr. Dynasaur law, which began a program to use state funds to provide health coverage to children who did not have it. By emulating Vermont's program, which covers over 50,000 children, we could provide healthcare to thousands of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens.

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 a former federal prosecutor, I believe that addiction is a healthcare issue as much as it is a law enforcement issue. Rather than criminalizing addiction, we can work to get those who suffer from it back on their feet. Having an incarcerated parent can significantly reduce a child's chances for success in life. We need to make sure that our policies are doing their best to keep Virginia's families together. When a parent's substance abuse impacts the entire family, we can provide programs to include prevention, out-of-home placement, and support services. As Lieutenant Governor, I will work to procure additional funding for family support services, drug treatment courts, and addiction treatment programs.

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 strongly support Governor McAuliffe's efforts to encourage interagency collaboration on children's issues, and I will work with our next Governor to ensure that our children benefit from streamlined and integrated support services. As Lieutenant Governor, I would sit on the Governor's Children's Cabinet and also would serve as the Chair of the Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success. These positions offer a unique opportunity to shape the policies that affect our children, and I will work to ensure that communication between agencies is made a priority. Just as Lieutenant Governor Northam successfully led an effort to secure a federal grant to create 13,000 pre-kindergarten spots for Virginia children, I plan to use the Lieutenant Governor's office to pursue collaborative projects that expand Virginia's early childhood education, improve our children's health outcomes, and provide them with safe communities in which to grow.

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?

Unfortunately, mental health issues are still deeply stigmatized in some communities and care is often inaccessible or prohibitively expensive. To address the stigmatization of depression and mental illness, we need to educate our communities, families, and those who work with youth to recognize mental health risk factors, symptoms, and treatment options. In order to increase treatment rates, youth need access to low-cost mental health services in their communities. To ensure access, the Virginia Legislature can enact legislation to keep health insurance affordable for all families, ensure that Virginia's health care plans cover mental health treatment, and provide resources to enable providers to reduce wait times and expand access to emergency treatment services.

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?

All of Virginia's students deserve an opportunity to succeed, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. As a member of Fairfax County Public Schools' Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee, I worked to address issues around the achievement gap in our county. As Lieutenant Governor, I will continue such work at the state level.

I support providing our schools with the resources they need to succeed, including high-quality teachers. Virginia continually lags behind in teacher pay despite our comparatively high economic well-being. The state could target funding to ensure that we attract and retain the best and brightest educators to Virginia's public schools.

In order to hold our schools to high standards, I also support legislation such as HB 1448, introduced in the 2015 session of the Virginia General Assembly, which would have created a Virginia Public School Improvement Program to work on closing the achievement gap and improving school accountability through annual reports to the Virginia Board of Education. We also can strengthen the communities and families that support our schools by building relationships through community programs including family fun nights, wrap-around services, tutoring, and home-visit programs where they are needed. Strengthening our communities through support services can address the underlying factors which keep students from achieving such as poor health, hunger, an unstable home life, homelessness, and more.
