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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 will work together with the Department of Education, the Council on Child Care and Early Childhood Programs, fellow General Assembly members, educational experts and leaders, community leaders, parents and teachers to identify all current programs and resources and find ways to identify redundancies, streamline programs and consolidate resources so that tax payer monies can be deployed more efficiently to better meet the needs of current and future students needing access to Virginia's early learning programs. I believe that we can then better make the case for increased funding and expansion of programs so that we can serve more children and better prepare them for entry into kindergarten.

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?

I commit to working together with experts in the Virginia Child Welfare System, as well as families, community leaders and fellow General Assembly members to identify how we can better support families and children once children are returned to their families from foster care. I believe that we can start by making parents aware of the resources that exist for them and their children through the children welfare system and community organizations. I also pledge to work with the aforementioned stakeholders to identify areas where the Commonwealth can add additional resources and programs or partner with community organizations to better support these children and their families. For instance, the Commonwealth can provide grants for youth development academies to help children overcome academic and social deficiencies caused by the upheaval in their lives.

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 pledge to work with the Department of Education, local school boards and division superintendents to examine current data on student referrals to law enforcement agencies in my District, the 49th, and across the Commonwealth. I will then consult with school officials, community leaders, parents, teachers, student leaders and my fellow General Assembly members to find ways to address student behavior issues without involving law enforcement except where student safety is impacted. I believe that we can and must keep school discipline issues from adding to a student's criminal record if at all possible. While the safety of all students is of paramount importance, we must also think of ways to keep students in school, learning and building skills that gain them employment rather than impacting their ability to be gainfully employed citizens while in school or upon graduation.

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 work with my fellow General Assembly members to allow reimbursements to school divisions that provide select medical services for uninsured students through the school's clinic. I will specifically work with the school divisions in my District to partner with community and health organizations to meet the health needs of these students that the school clinic can not meet. I believe that we must enable these organizations to expand and must make sure that we identify families and needs and connect them with existing and new resources.

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 pledge to work with schools, community leaders, community organizations, my fellow General Assembly members and families to identify current programs that support families that have suffered the ravages of substance abuse. I believe that while we have great organizations and programs in place, that we can identify gaps in support and expand resources available to these families. Parents need support in parenting techniques to make up for inadequate early bonds. Families need counseling and other programs to improve communication, decrease upheaval in the household and generally create more stability and harmony in the home. I believe we can partner with existing community organizations and state programs to identify current resources and programs as well as identify where we can expand services or create and fund additional services to help the family not only navigate the aftermath of substance abuse, but also address the underlying issues that led to the substance abuse.

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 work with the Virginia Children's Cabinet to ensure that we establish a safe system that tracks each child with one common file that all agencies can view and add to. As a cyber security expert, I am particularly concerned that we protect the identity and privacy of each child and family and that we accurately keep records of the child's journey through various agencies of the Child Welfare System. I believe that the Virginia Children's Cabinet should safeguard each child's file, so that no information is lost or compromised. The goal is to track the needs of the whole child so we can make sure that they are met and that tax payer dollars and resources are used wisely while not allowing any child to fall through the cracks.

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 to effective mental health care for children and adolescents in Virginia is the stigma attached to mental health treatment. I believe that we can work through school divisions to education students and their families about mental health issues and treatment. While access to adequate support for those seeking treatment is also of great concern, the stigma of needing and seeking help keeps many families in perpetual suffering. I believe that schools, community leaders and community organizations can work together with elected officials to encourage families to seek help when struggling with mental health issues. Furthermore, we can work together with law enforcement agencies and leaders to make sure that law enforcement professionals are trained to respond to individuals and families with mental health needs in a way that does not criminalize them and instead helps them connect with mental health treatment programs and resources in their area.

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?

I intend to expand the current STEM model into the new STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, & Medical) curriculum for all schools within the Commonwealth of Virginia. I will work with the Department of Education, community leaders, business owners and professionals, teachers and families to ensure that school curriculum aligns with current and future employment opportunities. Underserved schools receive more grant opportunities and additional resources, staffing and programs that are proven to reduce the achievement gap. I believe that we must address the achievement gap with funding, cultural awareness, leadership programs, parental involvement and family engagement.