

**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?

With so many studies already available to us from other states, we can begin by reviewing them and working to develop a curriculum that suits the needs specific to Virginia. With are specific socioeconomic conditions in mind, we can craft a baseline to work with while also letting our teachers implement the standards as works best in their own classrooms and learning centers. Teachers can take the recommended core standards and fit them to their students based on the individual child's needs. The state should supply the training and preliminary materials.

## 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?**

After-school meal programs can take the stress of eating that children may be living with now and remove a little of the burden the family experiences. I know the majority of the children in my son's kindergarten class took home the weekend meal bags because their families were in desperate need of the food. These programs are essential to families that are struggling to feed their children and themselves. Food banks should be supplemented to ensure they can feed all families in need. Working together with local farms, and Virginia has many in every locale, to donate food that is not being sold quickly enough can make a tremendous impact. Giving farms better breaks for their support of the local hungry community could make a major difference both by the state and by the state giving the local level the ability to vet and support these efforts.

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 predisposition to the criminal justice system begins when they are introduced to a similar system as children. We need to provide a stable environment that focuses on achievement as the first choice of adherence and to have the students be engaged in more after school activities. With these programs in place, we can greatly reduce the school to pipeline ratio. The students will be involved in an environment that brings out their best abilities and put them in a situation where they value themselves and the results in their actions. Ensuring the children have a healthy nutrition both during and after school gives them the peace of mind that they will be eating and full so they are less likely to begin their childhood by stealing to afford food for themselves and their families. Food is a motivator for crime. After school activities and additional education programs give children and teens a balance in their mental self and gives them the ability to showcase and build on the skills they have and love.

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?**

Tax code is a very sensitive, tricky thing to work with. However, it doesn't help that there are many hoops to jump through from the ground up in each state. Regulations, though implemented for a reason, aren't always as helpful as they were intended to be. I feel we can do more by allowing our small government to have more options for their communities. I feel we can alter the regulations at the local level to allow for more options to help the children in their communities. This isn't a large save but it is the beginning that can grow into something monumental. Local government knows more about what is happening in their communities and can potentially do more for their people if we gave them the ability to create more options. If a new way is implemented in a local community, it can set the stage for new areas of focus for the rest of the state, and hopefully, for the state to pick up. Additionally, if we have a quality plan presented to us that will help us save the lives and health of our children, who become our working adults, then you can rest assured that I will be behind it. My rural community is in dire need of help and I will do what I can within my capacity to help them.

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 feel it should be mandatory that the entire family receive basic counseling as soon as abuse is detected. This is similar to Alanon and Alateen for the families of alcoholics. The children do not understand what is happening and can't necessarily sympathize with a parent or the situation they have found themselves in. It is imperative that children understand that what they are experiencing isn't normal and that the world is not such a negative place. The feeling of exclusion can be averted with this sort of program assistance. Additionally, having quality involvement with the school systems is essential. This includes bringing in third party behavioral specialists to provide specialized support. Having private sessions weekly for the children to be comforted as well as assessed is fundamental. Again, provides a sense of caring from outside influences so the children don't feel alone. This also provides a trust bond with the child so they have someone they can go to when they are feeling abandoned, scared, or confused with the hardships from home.

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 promptly work with any coalitions or connect with others to study and provide proposals to this effect. I feel we have much to learn so having the ability to hire a quality team to research the project based on current evidence and evaluations would be paramount. This will give us the most quality ability to succeed. This can be tested prior to implementation in small areas where this opioid epidemic is the highest to identify what is fiscally possible.

## 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 the most significant barrier is as simple as lack of access. I believe we can provide more opportunity for something as simple as therapy and counseling beginning at the schools, even for families during scheduled after school hours. This can be third party but using the school as the base for the help. Children are in school for the better part of their days and weeks making this the first place to detect a problem and address it. Next, there should be, at minimum, one free counseling session per child in the state available within each county or town. This can be a mobile unit of volunteers or paid Therapists that can provide an open door to the children and have the ability to recommend children with great need to a higher area of help.

## 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?

Begin with better access to schools and after school education. Transportation is difficult for children when it comes to after school activities. I feel we need to have better abilities to transport these children to after school activities and home since it has the largest ability to boost involvement and achievement. Second, I feel the internet, being the barrier between higher and lower income families, is essential to aiding in reducing the gap. I intend to propose Last Mile Broadband across the entire state to ensure no home is left out and the schools have the minimum capability to have secure connections for these students to access the schools resources when they are in need and at home.