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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?

Virginia has among the highest levels of state standards of learning, has historically had the highest cut of scores for teacher cut scores for teacher testing and among the lowest teacher pay in the country. In order to be competitive with the rest of the metropolitan areas in the country with regard to attracting high tech industries to our state, we must have highly educated citizens. To that end, we must have a highly advanced educational system that includes PreK for all students. But we much go further than that, we should include educational opportunities for parents during prenatal visits to include early literacy.

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?

During the time children are separated from their families in foster care, parents should receive intense education and training that is followed up with ongoing support from social services. They should also receive support services and follow with guidance counselors and school administrators. A computerized reporting system that allows schools to view attendance and academic performance should be implemented to help social workers to monitor progress.

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?

Having been a school administrator, I experienced the school to prison pipeline first hand. I fought it by reporting a principal that refused to discipline a teacher who was verbally abusive to his students and who physically threatened them. I fought against a school culture that expelled students of color and disabled students at a higher rate than the school district. I was not aware at the time that this school was sanctioned by the Office Of Civil Rights Department of Justice for these practices. I was eventually terminated because of my advocacy of students and it was literally one of the proudest moments in my life with the OCR required the school system, again, to take corrective action as a result of my charges against them. The students who were expelled and arrested in school are statistically more likely to be incarcerated. I will continue to fight for students to stop the school to prison pipeline and make sure that school administrators are held responsible for fair equitable and responsible discipline policies.

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 custody for and plan to adopt my 20 month old granddaughter. Because my son isn't working and her mother isn't in her life at all she has Medicaid. I will propose legislation that would require states to provide health coverage for children regardless of the presence or absence of federal funds. I don't think any child in the state of Virginia should ever go one day without medical insurance.

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?

My son and I were awarded custody of my granddaughter at 5 months old partially because of her mother's abuse of opioid and prescription drugs. Six months later, she gave birth to another child who was born with drugs in her system. She fled the state where the child was born so that Virginia social services would not know about her pregnancy. Because she gave birth in Ohio and there was no nationwide central reporting system, the state of Ohio was not aware of her history. I would propose laws that require strict monitoring of drug addicted parents of child bearing years and a nationwide database for drug addicted mothers,

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 have mentioned in previous responses about the need for cross-system collaboration. Funding is necessary to provide the technological infrastructure to implement this type of system. Our goal, as mention earlier, should be nationwide collaboration that will protect children in need. Right now, parents can simply cross state lines to evade agencies. For school age children, parents could be required to sign an affidavit indicating whether there has been any court or social services intervention in any other state prior to enrollment with criminal penalties for failure to disclose. This affidavit could also be required at emergency rooms, doctor's offices and health departments.

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?

One of the greatest bane of the significant barriers to mental health care is lack of education. Parents often excuse issues in school as normal childhood behavior. Often, parents and teachers simply do not recognize the symptoms of mental health issues. Schools screen for scoliosis and hearing problems on a regular basis, it may be helpful to have school nurses and/or guidance counselors do periodic screening for depression and/or mental health as well.

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 perhaps one of the most difficult issues to address because it is multifaceted. We know what to do, we simply need to have the will to do it. Some of the most challenging school systems, for example, have implemented job-training and skill building for parents so they can find better paying jobs so that they don't have to work two and sometimes three jobs just to provide a home for their children.

This is often the reason that children don't receive medical care which may impact their school performance or attendance. To combat this problem some schools have incorporated school based health systems which research shows

I would propose legislation providing supportive regional services to meet the needs of families who are at risk.