

**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?

Elimination of duplicative oversight-agencies is always both cost- and program-effective.

## 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?

Increased funding is always worth revisiting at least biannually, not least given the sluggish recovery from The Great Recession of nearly a decade ago, and given, too, the disparity in economic conditions in various sections of the 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?

The Assembly already is studying, in cooperation with the Department of Education, means of assisting local school divisions--which have the responsibility in these matters--to address this admitted problem.

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?

Medicaid already requires nearly a fifth of the state's budget, so any reduction in federal tax dollars for FAMIS would require nothing less than a dramatic reassessment of a huge portion of our appropriations.

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?

No one has yet identified a 'program' to prevent drug or other substance abuse by adults, but with the Administration's full support the legislature is expanding its outreach and support for abusers of opioid drugs and we must do everything else possible, both fiscally and programmatically, to support our families that are susceptible to these problems.

## 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?**

As a longtime former teacher--32 years--and as a legislator for nearly twenty years I have supported and seen vast improvements in cross-agency cooperation for our children, and I will continue to support these programs budgetarily.

## 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 legislature two years ago increased by tens of millions of dollars support for severely mentally ill youth. Expanding facilities in our rural areas is the first priority.

## 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?**

No one has the answer to your question, and study after study demonstrates that there is at best a weak correlation between dollars spent per-pupil and pupil performance. The most significant factor in a student's academic performance is without question the quality of family life, so fostering a culture of strong families remains of paramount importance.