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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's schools operate differently because of the tax base that supports them. Larger cities and counties have better programs than rural cities and counties. Early learning programs need some standardization so that we can begin education on a more equal footing. Additionally, the earlier we identify problems such as learning or behavioral issues, the earlier we can help the student with these problems and help ensure a positive learning environment. Education is the key to most problems we have in this commonwealth. It's important to ensure everyone has a good start.

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?

The foster care programs differ by jurisdiction and are all based on money and budgets. Programs and services are all tied to localities and are not universally available in every city or county. Once the money or programs run out, there is no support for families. While the children are in the control of the foster care system or under social services control, there are funds and programs that are available. Once social services is removed from the situation, the money stops except for Medicaid. Now that Medicaid is under attack, it might not be available. Our children are our future and we need to look for ways to help these children to get on their feet. Many times, the only positive place for these children is at school. The performance of a child at school is the best indicator for how that child is doing. Some schools have social workers while others do not. The Commonwealth needs to have standard services district wide to support all children and not just the ones in the more wealthy areas.

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?

Innocent until proven guilty is a disappearing right in Virginia. Students charged with crimes are many times expelled from school. Because the court systems take an extended period of time for these children to reach their trials or final dispositions, they can be out of their schools for nearly a year. Some of these children end up being home schooled, while others end up in offender schools. Neither is good for the children. Children should not be expelled just because they are charged with a crime. If they end up in offender schools, they are surrounded with anti-social personality types that only further diminish their ability to succeed. Suspension should follow the normal school procedures and should be only used after all other avenues to keep the child in school are exhausted.

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?

This is a difficult question that will require budgets and decisions at times when they are available. If Virginia loses Medicaid and FAMIS our children will suffer because all foster children are on these programs and many rural schools have many children on these programs. Cutting these programs is a disaster without any thought and to the consequences. I don't have an answer to this. It will be difficult to solve.

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?

Children become who they are in the first 3 years of their life. I have represented over 1000 children with many in abuse and neglect situations. If their parents are drug addicts, the children suffer in their development and it usually does not manifest itself until they are older. We must treat drug addiction and find ways for them to succeed. Unfortunately if the drug of choice is heroin or opioids, it is unlikely that the parent will ever kick the addiction. Mental health issues can lead to this addiction as they self medicate themselves with drugs. Getting mental health support before they become addicted to drugs is critical to keeping the addiction from becoming consuming and irreversible.

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?

Yes. Children are our future. It takes a village to support and care for our children.

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?

Money, services and stigma are the most significant barriers to effective mental health. We would rather incarcerate people with mental illness than treat them. This issue requires professionals and services and financing. It's a budget issue that needs support. If we standardize these requirements among all school systems, we can at least bring regional professionals to bear on the problem. If we continue to look at the school systems on a city and county basis, there will always been good and bad schools and programs.

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?

We need to make children stay in school. Many children I represent drop out in the 8th to 9th grade, end up as offenders and never again become productive citizens. For many, there is no incentive at home to keep them in school. If financial benefits were tied to education, then there would be an incentive for these children to stay in school because the families would be more involved to keep their benefits.