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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 must expand our education system to include preschool for all children. It would also be beneficial to work with non-profits like the international non-profit Parents as Teacher program. Parents as Teachers promotes optimal early development, learning and health of young children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. They advance the delivery of high quality services for families through a comprehensive system of supports and innovative solutions.

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?

Two policy changes I support are expanding Medicaid and raising the minimum wage. Hard working parents deserve to receive a decent wage to be able to support their families.

Additionally, I believe that parents need affordable child care so the added funds they are making from higher paying jobs are not all funneled into child care. That means expanding programs that offer assistance to low income parents in need of child care.

Nutrition assistance, especially through free and reduced price lunches must be protected and expanded so no matter what a child is paying for their lunch they are getting the same high quality food as their peers.

Parents also need housing assistance to make sure that a child has a roof over their head at the end of each day.

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 support the school guidance package released in 2014 by the The U.S. Department of Education (ED), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The school discipline guidance package was created to assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. Arrest should be a last resort not a first response. School resource officers and administration should sit down and talk to their children before sending them to the jailhouse.

Furthermore, I want to promote policies that allow schools to stop demanding their students perform well on SOL tests and can help educators maximize their impact on students. That means providing programs that promote training in trades, providing students with the skills they need to begin successful jobs after school, in addition to preparing kids to go to 4 year universities.

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?

Our Commonwealth must make it a priority to make sure every child has access to health care. If the federal government cuts funding then Virginia must make up the difference to support FAMIS and Medicaid to make sure every child has health 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?

I was raised by a mother who suffered from addiction. Now she is in recovery because she received the help she needed. Too many lives are lost in Virginia each year because of the opioid epidemic. I will encourage the Commonwealth to work with local communities, law enforcement and health care providers to work on finding solutions to end 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?

The Virginia Children's Cabinet will have my full support and I will be a champion for their recommendations.

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?

Many children in our Commonwealth suffer from food insecurity which can contribute to depression and anxiety. Two policy changes I support, expanding Medicaid and raising the minimum wage, will help to lift families out of poverty and alleviate the cause of some of the mental health issues that affect children. The state must work with localities to remove the stigma for those seeking care and make sure the care they seek is available. Parents and schools must be educated to learn how to look for signs of mental illness.

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?

First and foremost our schools need adequate funding, so teachers and students have the resources they need to be successful. This will also improve support staffing which include counselors, vice-principals and other staff that can support our teachers and students. We need to extend learning opportunities by offering Pre-K to all Virginia children starting as early as 3 and 4 years old. And, we can expand before and after school programs to assist children with more learning opportunities. We need to train our school personnel in cultural understanding, and acceptance while adopting curricula that do the same.