

# 2018 Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

**Name: Sasha Bentley**

**District: 14**

**Position: 1**

1. If you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has a developmental disability, how would you describe its impact on you?

I've met many inspiring people with varying levels of physical and developmental disability throughout my life. I've served them during my time as a paralegal. I became very close to one client, in particular. She had a developmental disability and we learned a lot from each other. Our communications grew more direct and into more depth and I believe a lot of my passion for bringing people together comes from my experience working with her over a year. I am passionate about serving the public in Olympia and believe in making sure there is an equal playing field.

2. What are your top three legislative priorities and how would you help people with developmental disabilities in them?

The overall goal I have is to ensure the government is working for and with the people in the most efficient, effective, and proactive ways possible. The top three issues for me are health care, social equity/education, taxes and economic equality.

**Healthcare:** I will work for healthcare for all and ensure we are providing comprehensive mental health coverage and support programs to reduce healthcare costs and make healthcare more accessible. Early healthcare access is important so early detection and prevention are available to all.

**Social equity and education:** I'm running for office because I believe my position in state government will allow me to truly address racial, social (including developmental disabilities), and economic inequalities from an institutional level. Because I believe it is the role of government to ensure an equitable system, and our elected official's role is to work towards that and to go further; to guarantee support services to any disenfranchised individuals and groups, to create programs assist individuals to thrive and prioritizing investments and innovation in our educational system. Specifically, I feel it is my role as a state official to ensure children are properly fed and have a home and responsible caretakers, and that mental and physical health is provided inside and outside of school. We should support our teachers by hiring more counselors and ensure they all receive continued professional development. Our schools need to be well-supplied (including technology). Guaranteeing preschool for every child, and investment in after-school and summer programs, especially for more rural areas like District 14 which have limited options. I support free and low-cost community college, and District 14 has an opportunity to develop our trade and technical schools, and develop apprenticeship programs. I'd like to bring more educational opportunities to our students, especially in art, music, gender and cultural studies, critical thinking, STEM, family planning, and general life skills (finances, nutrition, and exercise, etc.). Washington State has an opportunity to go beyond fully funding education, it's time we invest in our schools, our teachers, and our students.

**Affordable housing:** Washington State has a housing crisis and I will work to direct more resources to communities with housing needs, like people with developmental disabilities, providing incentives to private companies and local governments to create affordable housing developments, developing innovative strategies to serve the homeless, removing barriers to homeownership.

3. What developmental disability expertise, experience or personal interest will you bring to office?

I decided to run because I believe my position in state government will allow me to address social and economic inequalities at an institutional level. I realized after the 2016 election the responsibility I had and I realized the skills and experiences I have are the kinds we need in government. I'm passionate about public service and believe elected office is where I can create the most change. Our country has been divided for as long as I can remember and I want to help bridge the divide, between individuals and communities, and focus on solving problems for our most vulnerable which will create a better state for us all. I understand the institutional and social inequalities the disability community has to deal with daily and I will work to remove institutional barriers and promote accessible and equal communities and governing.

4. Is there other information you'd like constituents with developmental disabilities and their family and friends to know?

I am a hard-working entrepreneur and resourceful community organizer. After living in some of the most liberal and most conservative places in the country, I've made my home in the 14th Legislative District in Washington State. I value both the diversity of the district's landscape and the diversity of its opinions, and I want to represent all of its residents. Through my upbringing, I became aware of the injustices many Americans face at school, at work, and in their neighborhoods, and I value education, community, and equality. A graduate of the University of Washington with a BA in Political Science and a minor in Women's Studies, I am running for office because my goal is to address racial, social, and economic inequalities at an institutional level and to improve how government works. As Chair of the Klickitat County Democrats, I worked with a team to improve the visibility of our organization across the county and increased member engagement. As a member of the leadership team of the Columbia Gorge Women's Action Network, I will continue to encourage and train women to run for office and participate in voter education and outreach efforts. I plan to fast forward health care legislation and full-funding to our schools and will support legislation to ensure fair employment practices, child care services, and economic development, and will promote evidence-based solutions to homelessness, crime, and environmental impact.