

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: AJ Cooper

District: 15th LD

Position: State Representative Position 2

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

I am currently serving as secretary on the Community SEEDs board based in Zillah. Our mission is to create a social enterprise campus providing resources for people of all abilities. At the Center we can offer employment, job training, and enrichment activities that includes gardening, dog grooming and caring for shelter cats.

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

Fully funding education (inclusive programs for students of all abilities), continuing environmental stewardship in Yakima Valley, reforming and expanding access to healthcare for all, protecting workers fundamental rights, expanding access to affordable housing, making debt-free college a reality and working towards ending systematic racism

3. **With the current economic crisis, how would you protect services that people with I/DD and their families need?**

One of my top priorities will be to fund programs to serve the people. There are not enough resources to go to those in need.

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

When my friend's son was 8 he was non-verbal, wearing a diaper, and would not look anyone in the eyes. His family enrolled him in the CARD program. In just a couple of years he was able to use the bathroom on his own, to communicate in his own way, to smile for the camera, and even prepare some simple food items. When individuals and families have access to resources the impact is life changing. After college, I worked at school for children with autism, behavioral disorders, and/or other developmental disabilities. I understand the need and the benefit of supporting and funding programs which benefit individuals and their families.