

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Daniel Smith

District: 17th LD

Position: Senate

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 have deep personal and professional experience with people who have developmental disabilities. For over twenty years, I have been a social worker and have spent a large part of my career developing and implementing community-based programs for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. This work had a profound impact on me personally and professionally. At the time of the program's launch, it was estimated that over six thousand adults with I/DD were not receiving any services whatsoever. Through the Support Services Brokerage model, founded on the principles of self-determination, there are now about 8000 adults who are receiving services that support independent living in their communities. Although this work began a long time ago, I am still deeply connected to the community and continue to be inspired by the people who are benefiting from this model.

On the personal side, my nephew has a developmental disability. I am grateful that I have been able to support my sister and her family by drawing on my experiences as a social worker, supporting her in navigating systems, and providing guidance on a number of needs a family experiences when their child has a developmental disability.

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

1. Ensuring we safely open our economy and our budget is balanced without undermining our social safety net through austerity measures.
2. Health care access and delivery of care that is more integrated and connected to allied services, community-based organizations, and funded adequately.
3. Improvements in the mental health, SUD, and DDA services that often intersect but remain very siloed.

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

Protecting services for families and people with I/DD and social services in general will be one of the highest priorities I will have. I look forward to working very closely with advocacy organizations, families, people with I/DD, and others to ensure we do not make a bad situation worse than it already is by cutting essential services.

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

I am fully committed to partnering and executing strategies that support and empower families and people with I/DD to live their lives in their community with the needed structural support to be successful. One of the motivating factors for my run for office was my experiences in our community where this is not happening on a scale that is needed, knowing it should be demanded and expected.