

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Jamie Smith

District: 25th Legislative District

Position: State Representative, Position 1

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

As a school teacher I work with individuals with a range of different developmental disabilities every day. In college I worked in catering with a man with down syndrome, and my nephew is autistic. Through teaching, working alongside of, and with these individuals I know that they have abilities far beyond what the general public tends to give them credit for. They may learn differently, or take more time to get a task done, but they have the ability to work alongside anyone and offer great gifts to the work environment.

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

Education, homelessness and affordable housing, and increasing living wage jobs are currently top issues within my district. As a teacher at Rogers High School I have taught classes of 42 and of 22 and can tell you that the class with 22 got more done, had higher grades, and worked together better. Large class sizes are detrimental to student success, and we must work to lower class sizes across the state. We must make sure we give a top education to all students including students with developmental disabilities. Homelessness is on the rise in my area, and I have had multiple students that were living with their families in hotels or out of their cars, and much of it is caused due to the lack of affordable housing in the district. Unfortunately for many of our families with students with developmental disabilities the costs of caring for the kids and the lack of job opportunities for those with developmental disabilities means that many of these families are housing insecure, and we must make sure they have a safe and consistent place to call home. Finally, many with developmental disabilities are underemployed, and we can work at the state level to incentivize businesses to hire individuals with disabilities and make sure that work environments are accommodating.

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

The current global health and economic crisis has amplified our need for protections of services depended upon by Washington residents living with disabilities. A large part of my platform is funding education and healthcare services across the state, and that most certainly includes equitable education opportunities and mental/physical health services for our community members with developmental disabilities. I will work with other lawmakers to draft and sponsor legislation that reaches these goals.

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

It is the job of state legislators to make sure Washington works for all of its residents. That means we must have education that enables students to be prepared for college, military service, or the workforce. We must provide mental health services and healthcare, and we must incentivize businesses to hire Washington residents with disabilities.