

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Emily Wicks

District: State Representative

Position: 38th Legislative District, Pos. 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?

I am privileged to have several friends with developmental disabilities who have inspired me with their passions and care for others. My friend Trevor has been a part of my husband's friend group since high school. Trevor absolutely loves sports and can talk circles around anyone when it comes to stats and players. Whether it's football, baseball, basketball or golf, he knows his stuff. He also shares our love for our alma mater, Marysville-Pilchuck and since 2004 has worked as the assistant to the Marysville School District's Athletic Director and Marysville-Pilchuck's Athletic Director. My husband, James is also the baseball coach at MP and Trevor is part of his coaching staff. He helps ensure we have an announcer and manages the score board, which is a great help for James. And as a side, he was also the number one proponent of my husband proposing to me, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Nearly everyone knows Preston Dwoskin. Preston is a proud MP grad as well as is one of the most passionate politicians I have ever met. He spends each legislative session advocating for more funding for special education. When we first got to know each other, I was working at the Marysville School District and with the Director of Special Education, we hosted an education town hall with our Senator John McCoy, Representatives June Robinson and Mike Sells and School Board President Pete Lundberg. Preston was the one with the idea, and served as the emcee at the town hall. Preston's persistence and advocacy is beyond inspiring and motivating. He pushes his elected leaders to do better and won't give up on what he believes in. He has ensured that he is a force to be reckoned with in Olympia and across the 38th Legislative District. Everyone wants and needs his vote and support.

My work at the Marysville School District not only introduced me to my forever friend Preston, it also got me in contact with Amy and Deanna Sheldon. These two amazing individuals both have daughters with developmental disabilities and created Leah's Dream Foundation. This organization, among others things, donated \$45,000 to build an inclusive play structure at Kellogg Marsh Elementary and funded Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) training for staff and counselors to help them assist students with Autism or physical limitations, and to help them convey their wants and needs to others. Not a day goes by where you don't see one or more members of the Sheldon Family at a Marysville school, coordinating a family night with the Native Education or Special Education Department, helping lead a parent meeting, working

directly to support a student, or cheering on a Marysville athletic team, not to mention their support of the District's levy and bond efforts. They are truly a staple of this community and our school district. Since our first meeting I have been witness to their love of all students, and their selfless service. People like the Sheldons and the children they help support have guided my work and will continue to guide my decisions as an elected official.

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

1. I'm running to help improve our **healthcare** system. Despite the successes of Obamacare, there are far too many Washington families and vulnerable populations that still do not have adequate affordable health care. I'm committed to strengthening our state, regional and local public health delivery system, including mental health, which is vastly underserved. I also strongly support a state-level public option and single-payer health care and want to work in Olympia to bring us closer to making that a reality for the people of our state. Our state continues to promote access to affordable quality health care, but we still need to create a sustainable healthcare system that works for us all. Healthcare costs are growing faster than most of us can sustain, another problem that's been exacerbated by the current pandemic, and policymakers and patients face a delivery system that is increasingly complex. I will support and champion increased transparency in our healthcare delivery system and I want to help Washington lead the way on a state-level public option and single-payer health care plan. I wholeheartedly support legislation and policies that ensure that all people are cared for and given the opportunity to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

2. I want to change our **education** system and meet people where they are - ensuring that all children and their families have an equal chance of success. Creating an economy and education system that works for everyone must include focus on equity. It is not enough to give blanket support to policies that help families, special and necessary consideration must be given to traditionally marginalized people. Schools, neighborhoods, and communities where people of color and those with disabilities live, learn and work must be at the forefront of any proposal. In the economic recovery we will be working on in the coming months and years, I will lend my voice and my efforts to make sure these people are not excluded. Students with disabilities deserve personalized and ambitious goals, high quality instruction, and individualized transition planning. It's important that they have access to age-appropriate general education curriculums in inclusive settings and individualized supports and services so they can be prepared for future employment, education, and independent living. Having also witnessed the effect of the October 2014 shooting on Marysville teachers, staff, students and families, I know we cannot take for granted the role counselors, school nurses and psychologists, and social workers play in a child's success. Education only happens

when you are in a place to receive it, and that means having good physical and mental health, food in your belly, and the heat and lights on at home. We need to protect and nurture the whole child, regardless of ability, and that includes caring for those who take the role of caring for them so much of the day.

3. In the next 25 years, I see a more thoughtful, well-connected **transportation** system that gets people across our District and to other areas of the Puget Sound, and our entire state, with ease. This will require community planning and problem solving where I have not seen leadership before. In Marysville, this means smart and strategic development around existing transit stops. We need to encourage less vehicle use and ensure transit is easier and more accessible, so it is everyone's first choice when traveling. This can happen only when we look for progressive strategies for funding our transportation system and I welcome any and all ideas for funding. I care deeply about quality regional and local transportation systems. They are necessary to providing opportunities for all, and this includes paratransit. It's also about our health - lowering our dependence of fossil fuels by investing in transit and creating walkable, connected communities with access to health clinics and pharmacies. It's about our economy and the ability of all people to efficiently and inexpensively move around their communities and region so they may make purchases, support businesses, maintain their personal health and bolster the economy.

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

We are facing a nearly \$8 billion budget shortfall over the next biennium due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and this will be the biggest issue that we must address in order to move our progressive values forward in the future. Most groups are going to be working hard to ensure their priorities and efforts don't get defunded as we work to shore up resources. Working to prevent cuts to critical services starts with closing tax loopholes, and I am committed to being vigilant in doing that more so than I've seen happen in years passed. This session should be bad news for those well-funded lobby groups rather than those working to provide basic needs and support our most vulnerable. We need to prioritize our people, families, and workers so they are healthy and have the necessary financial resources to be active partners in helping our small businesses, regional industries, and overall economic recovery. Budget cuts to essential programs and services will only widen the income inequality gap and prolong the recession.

I am running for office to create a more equitable education system, healthcare for all, accessible public transit, pursue a robust investment into public and affordable housing, and an economic recovery package that prioritizes our families, workers, local businesses, underserved communities, and our most vulnerable. Every budget and policy decision I make will have these priorities in mind. I will also be pursuing

progressive revenue avenues to make sure we have additional funding to help support our much needed safety nets and invest in affordable and supportive housing, which is so greatly needed.

As we help our communities get back on track, we have a choice: We can continue to build an economy that works for big corporations and the elite, or we can rebuild an economy that works for everyone.

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

The 38th Legislative District is where I was born and raised. Marysville, Tulalip and Everett shaped who I am, and I'm ready to represent our diverse voices in Olympia. We are in dire straits, and even though we are lucky to live in a place like Washington, we must be our countries' leader.

I'm running to be a voice for, and take action on behalf of, all of our neighbors and families across Washington. As we recover, we need to think ahead. This pandemic is affecting every aspect of our life - how we work, how we learn, how we connect, and how we live, and its shown us the need and value of safety nets. It's going to take a lot of analyzing, pivoting and innovation to adapt to our new normal. Innovating and adapting is where I thrive, and I know I can take that to Olympia and make a difference.

I will fight hard to lift up our economy, support our local governments, give voice to the underrepresented, and alleviate the pain and stress of those who are disenfranchised. I am committed to bringing your thoughts and ideas to the table and making collaborative decisions that will positively impact those who live here. I want to ensure that no one in our community feels powerless and that each of you sees positive change and intentional decision-making as we navigate a very complicated system, together. I work hard. I am resourceful. I place a high value on responsiveness, being prepared, following through, and taking action. If appointed, you will see me, hear from me, and most importantly, I will make myself available to hear from you.