

## 2020 Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Claus Joens  
District: 39LD  
Position: House 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?***

I am a high school teacher who works with students with developmental disabilities on a daily basis. You realize that all people learn differently, and it is my job to take the time and customize my instruction to the person, and not the curriculum. Students generally exceed your expectations, so it is a good rule not to have preconceived expectations until you get to know a person very well. Students with developmental disabilities are often quite humble in spite of their significant capabilities, which provides a lesson for the rest of us.

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

COVID-19 has created a huge unemployment problem where people are losing their income and benefits due to circumstances beyond their control. Every American has the right to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You can't do this without a job or an income, so this comes first.

COVID-19 has created a budget deficit. While I support straight cuts across the board, the state budget has constitutionally protected items, so the remaining 15% of the budget that is not protected may experience severe cuts. We have to be mindful of the programs that are cut and the impact on real people who rely upon them.

We need to start a state public bank to help fund housing and reduce homelessness.

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

In addition to continuing unemployment benefits and extending medical benefits, I don't know. This is the part where it is easy to make promises you can't keep. I would have to wait until I was in Olympia and knew the severity of the cuts, as well as the budget constraints of where the cuts will come from to answer this. In a perfect world, we would implement a tax on the wealthiest that are still making money during the crisis to help support those citizens who are suffering during the crisis. I do understand the necessity of I/DD services and places them on par with medical benefits.

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

Americans with disabilities are entitled to the same quality of life as everyone else. Where I/DD services are required to remove barriers, it is discriminatory not to support them. I appreciate your family's needs very much, and will work tirelessly to support them.