

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Brian Duthie

District: 25th Legislative District

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?

As a firefighter, and as the brother of a sister who has cerebral palsy, I have had a lot of interaction with individuals who have a developmental disability. Certainly, every interaction with any of my patients I always strive to connect with them and treat them with the utmost respect and dignity possible. Challenges do occur when trying to communicate at times. I have found that your approach and using resources available (loved ones/care takers) to help bridge the gap is important. The most important lesson I have learned is to never assume I know the best way to communicate and to take what is offered and build on that. As a 12-year camp counselor for youth burn survivors I continually engage, learn from, love, and grow as a person from being a part of unique groups of people. And in the end, it is our compassion, empathy, and yearning for understanding for one another that forms our humanity.

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

My platform focuses on finally fulfilling the needs of education, addressing the needs of the houseless, and making serious strides toward repairing and modernizing our infrastructure in the district and the county. We made great strides in addressing the funding situation for our education system here in Washington, but it is past time to fulfill our obligations on this matter. Education is the great equalizer. Thereby, it is the path out of poverty, a shield against systemic racism, and a tool for strength among the underserved populations in Washington. Part of finally fulfilling our obligation to our next generations is to ensure that the infrastructure and resources are permanently in place so that students may receive the highest quality education regardless of race, sex, the existence of a developmental disability, or whatever perceived barrier that society has created for them. When every student can be guaranteed that their health, their zip code, and their starting point in life are no longer barriers, then we can begin to say that we want the best for our children. Then, when they leave school and enter the workforce, these perceived barriers may no longer exist as well. I will stand in support of individuals overcoming the societal barriers like sub-minimum wage or segregation in the workplace based on a developmental disability. I will support efforts to enrich the quality of life for these individuals and erase the stigma that society places on a perceived disability.

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

The COVID crisis has hit us all extremely hard, but we should not let that change our priorities as a society or community. I will seek to ensure that DSHS continues to have the funding and tools to address the needs of the DD community. That is the meaning of "community" is not it? That some of us that are used to having a lot should sometimes make the noble sacrifice so that others who are struggling may be lifted up when they need it the most. I am aware of the sometimes-wretched history of how this nation has treated individuals with developmental disabilities, and I will always stand against going back to that. I will seek to ensure funding levels for education, SSI,

and other resources this community depends on do not become the target of the sacrifices that some of us may have to make.

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

I know it seems hard during this time of many crisis unfolding at once. The future is unpredictable, and we are all trying to figure out the best way forward. I want to ensure folks that they have an ally in me when it comes to who will stand for the folks that sometimes need someone by their side. I have always been dedicated to service from my time as a Lifeguard at the local YMCA to my current career as a firefighter/first responder. In the Air Force Reserves, I learned as a young adult what it means to have somebody's back. I carried that into my career as a firefighter, where I have been with people in some of their most difficult times. And, I will carry these experiences to Olympia, where I will always fight for you.