

2020 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Mari Leavitt

District: 28th

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?*

Our son has a speech impairment and we worked or continue to work with a non-profit developmental disability organization that does speech assessment as well as our local K-12 school district for services. I have learned to navigate these services and be an advocate for my son to ensure he receives the services he needs to be successful.

A dear friend's daughter has autism and I've had the pleasure of watching their family come together and provide support as they navigate the challenges and opportunities they face.

I have also worked with several members from the developmental disability community from birth-to-three programs, in k-12 education, and through job placement programs.

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

In addition to ensuring a full economic and public health recovery from COVID-19, I've identified a number of issues facing the 28th District, and have centered my top priorities on these challenges facing Pierce County and our state as a whole. Here are my priorities:

1. Putting our students first. Though the Legislature finally passed a school funding bill that fulfills McCleary requirements, we need to make sure we're doing all we can to give students every opportunity to succeed. When it comes to higher education, we need to work on making college more affordable. The single greatest way to grow our economy is to invest in our institutions of higher learning. That means making tuition more affordable and increasing accessibility for our next generation of workers. It also means focusing on public early learning programs in all districts in the State and ensuring developmental disabilities programs are accessible and robust.

2. Providing behavioral health services and strengthening the social safety-net. We have a looming crisis when it comes to servicing our most vulnerable. That includes veterans, seniors, foster children and struggling families. I will work to ensure that all those in need have access to support. With crises across our state involving homelessness, affordable housing, opioid addiction, the state must do more to help those in need.

3. Creating jobs and investing in our future for all people in our state and with varying abilities. We must continue to tackle traffic gridlock and invest in our communities to create family wage jobs. That means making sure we have living wages and support our local homegrown businesses. Our state is in the midst of an economic crisis, and we need to make sure we're leveraging any and all opportunities to ensure all Washingtonians recover and thrive.

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

It's essential that we do not cut services and support to people with disabilities as we address the current economic crisis. Surging levels of unemployment are going to hit people with disabilities especially hard, who already must be most precarious of our public health emergency. As a legislator, I am committed to ensuring people with disabilities and their families have the support and resources they need through these difficult times.

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

I have sponsored bills that support the disability community and will continue to do so in my second term. I'm proud to be a co-sponsor for HB1093, which supported special education programs. I also have sponsored both HB1344 and HB1303 legislation to support making child care more accessible, which is important to helping all families thrive, especially those with kids and/or adults with I/DD. Further, I have been appointed as a legislative member to the Rucklehaus Task Force on Residential Rehabilitation Center Clients (as required in ESSB6419 and included the requirement that accommodations be included for participants in post-secondary education options for our incarcerated folks (HB2299), when that has not been a requirement in times past.

Campaign Website: <https://marileavitt.com/>