

2016 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: Alishia Topper

District: 49th LD, pos. 2

1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has a developmental disability?

Yes, my uncle Jodon was born with cerebral palsy and it permanently affects his physical and mental capabilities. My mother became pregnant with me when she was only fourteen years old, so my uncle Jodon is just a few years younger than me. He was like a brother while I was growing up. He is permanently wheelchair bound, and as a child I would take him on walks, join him at summer camps and swim therapy sessions. In high school, I was a teacher's assistant for our developmentally disabled classrooms and have an empathetic heart. This issue is near and dear to my heart.

2. What are your top three legislative priorities?

I will work to address the affordable housing crisis in our state so all Washington residents have the opportunity to live in safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities.

I will work to fully fund education via the McCleary Decision, as well as, increase access to early childhood education and address post-high school learning. I take a holistic approach to our educational shortcomings.

I will work to support businesses and address our obligation to the environment. They do not have to be mutually exclusive goals.

3. What area of expertise, experience or personal interest will you bring to office?

I am not your average legislator. I have a diverse background, both professionally and personally. My distinctive set of educational, professional and life experiences makes me uniquely qualified to serve in the legislature. I am a champion for issues around poverty because I grew up with a teenage single mother who struggled to care for my little sister and me. I have a firm understanding of how policy decisions affect the average person through my work as a City Councilwoman. I put myself through college and was first person in my family in three generations to earn a college degree. I have a Master's degree and extensive work experience in the nonprofit sector. All these experiences, expertise and personal interests will help me be a strong legislator.

4. Wages for contracted community residential support workers are set by the legislature and are about \$10 an hour, causing huge turnover and lack of workers. How will you address this issue?

I support raising the minimum wage which will be a start.

5. 16 states have closed all their institutions for people with developmental disabilities; most others are working to do so. Would you support the consolidation of our state institutions, providing the residents with community alternatives that meet their needs?

I would need more information about the plan and alternatives to comment. I look forward to further researching and discussing this issue with you.

6. With the Federal court decisions requiring our state to better fund education (McCleary) and reduce mental health competency backlogs and warehousing (Trueblood), how would you propose to fund these lawsuits and not cut human services (be specific please)?

Restructuring our regressive tax code will bring a much needed infusion to the state's coffers. I support a form of a capital gains tax, as well as cutting tax loopholes for businesses that are the biggest economic players in the state. These key changes will create enough revenue to fund both McCleary and Trueblood. I will work to find the right solutions for all Washingtonians.

Other information you'd like constituents to know: