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House District 31 Position 2

Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has an intellectual/developmental disability? (I/DD) If so would you describe its impact on you? How would it affect you in this job?

Yes, I do have a personal connection with individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Two of my children have profound disabilities: one with Cerebral Palsy (CP) and the other with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

This personal experience has profoundly impacted me and has deeply shaped my understanding of the challenges individuals with I/DD and their families face. It has given me firsthand insight into the importance of access to early interventions, quality education services, reliable transportation, and support for activities of daily living. I understand the significant role of Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in providing essential services and support.

My personal connection has also underscored the importance of respite care and other supports for families, who often bear a considerable burden in caring for their loved ones. This experience has instilled in me a strong commitment to advocating for policies that enhance the quality of life for individuals with I/DD and their families.

In this job, my personal connection to I/DD will drive my advocacy for inclusive policies that ensure individuals with I/DD can participate fully in their communities. I will promote access to the necessary supports and services, from education and healthcare to housing and employment. My firsthand experience will inform my decisions and help me to be a strong advocate for the needs of individuals with I/DD and their families, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met.

What are your top three priorities and how would you ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families are included in them?

My top three priorities are public safety, infrastructure improvements, and quality education. I am committed to ensuring that people with developmental disabilities and their families are included in all these areas. Here's how I plan to achieve that:

1. Public Safety:

o Inclusion in Emergency Planning: I will advocate for including people with developmental disabilities in emergency preparedness and response plans. This involves ensuring that emergency services are trained to assist individuals with I/DD and that communication strategies are accessible to everyone.

o Community Policing: Promote community policing efforts that include training for law enforcement on how to interact effectively and compassionately with individuals with I/DD. This can help ensure that public safety measures are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.

2. Infrastructure Improvements:

o Accessible Transportation and Public Infrastructure: I will push for infrastructure improvements that include accessible transportation options and public infrastructure. This means advocating for public transportation systems, sidewalks, and other public facilities to be designed and maintained to serve individuals with mobility challenges and developmental disabilities.

o Inclusive Public Spaces: Ensure that public infrastructure projects include the development of accessible and inclusive public spaces. This includes parks, community centers, and public buildings designed to be accessible to individuals with developmental disabilities.

3. Quality Education and Lifelong Supports:

o Inclusive Education Policies: Advocate for educational policies that ensure students with developmental disabilities receive appropriate support and services. This includes adequate funding for special education programs and integrating inclusive teaching practices in all classrooms.

o Early Intervention Programs: Support early intervention programs that provide critical support to children with developmental disabilities from a young age. Ensuring these programs are well-funded and accessible can make a significant difference in the lives of these children and their families.

o Lifelong Supports: I recognize that many I/DD families age out of care and need continued support throughout their lives. I will work on policies that provide lifelong support for individuals with developmental disabilities, ensuring they have access to the necessary resources and services as they transition into adulthood and beyond.

By incorporating these strategies into my top priorities, I will work to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are not only considered but actively included in all policy and planning decisions. My personal experience with I/DD in my family will guide my efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive community for everyone.

Washington is 38th in the Nation for per-capita spending for individuals with I/DD. Would improving this statistic be a priority for you, and if so, what would your strategy be?

Improving Washington's ranking in per-capita spending for individuals with I/DD is my priority. Ensuring that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive adequate support and services is essential for their well-being and inclusion in our communities. My strategy to address this issue involves several key components.

First, I will advocate for increased state funding for services and support for individuals with I/DD. This means working within the legislative budget to prioritize these funds and ensure they are allocated efficiently and effectively. Additionally, I will pursue federal grants and programs that can supplement state funding for I/DD services, collaborating with federal representatives to secure additional resources and ensure that Washington takes full advantage of available federal support.

Collaboration with stakeholders is also crucial. I will engage with advocacy groups like The Arc of

Washington State and other stakeholders to understand their needs and priorities. Their insights and expertise will be invaluable in shaping effective policies and funding strategies. Furthermore, I will explore opportunities for public-private partnerships to enhance services for individuals with I/DD, collaborating with non-profits, private organizations, and community groups to leverage additional resources and support.

Improving service delivery is another important aspect of my strategy. I will ensure that existing funds are used efficiently by promoting best practices in service delivery. This includes streamlining administrative processes, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and ensuring that funds benefit individuals with I/DD and their families. Additionally, I will work to develop comprehensive support programs that address the full range of needs of individuals with I/DD, including early intervention, education, employment, healthcare, housing, and community inclusion.

Finally, I recognize the importance of providing lifelong support for individuals with I/DD, especially as many families face challenges when their loved ones age out of traditional care systems. I will develop and implement policies that ensure continuous support for individuals with I/DD throughout their lives, addressing critical needs as they transition into adulthood and beyond.

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