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House District 22 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?

My mother was a victim of polio as a young woman was confined in her later life to an electric chair. I am part of Olympia City's employee work group for those with silent disabilities, as I have one and, at one time, before corrective surgery, suffered from two disabilities. These lived experiences give me a unique perspective on those living daily with barriers and obstacles to living a mentally healthy and fulfilling life. I use these to help evaluate policy and actions at the city and will use them as a legislature.

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

My highest priorities will include:

* Workforce development (without this work, we will not develop a green economy, provide access to jobs, improve housing and food security, and have the skilled labor to build housing, and reverse healthcare workforce shortages).

Workforce development support is the key to so many of our intersectional issues.

* Helping local jurisdictions to do their work on all the intersectional issues facing our communities (diversity and equity, climate mitigation, homelessness, housing, poverty, and reimagining public safety), as cities and counties are the entities doing this work.

* Addressing our healthcare crisis (access to healthcare for all starts by working to overcome the healthcare crisis (workforce shortages, high cost of drugs and care, access to care, etc). Build a health care plan for the state of Washington—budget item and develop and seat a committee tasked to build this plan. A budget proviso was made in the 2024 session to develop a holistic Animal Health Care plan, making it a precedent to create a Health Care plan. It could be as simple as incorporating animals into this work or working simultaneously to develop these two plans.

Ensuring that people with developmental disabilities and their families are included in these priorities is very important to me. This means developing and funding inclusive training programs that provide individuals with developmental disabilities with the skills needed for meaningful employment, promoting supportive employment practices, and collaborating with advocacy organizations. In supporting local jurisdictions, I will encourage inclusive policy frameworks, ensure funding includes provisions for developmental disabilities services, and promote community engagement practices that involve affected individuals in decision-making processes. In addressing the healthcare crisis, I will advocate for expanding accessible healthcare services for individuals with developmental disabilities, incorporate training for healthcare professionals on their specific needs, and integrate these needs into the state's comprehensive healthcare plan.

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?

Yes, improving and increasing support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is a priority of mine. Everyone deserves the support they need to live a full and meaningful life. My strategy to address this would include advocating for increased state and federal funding, expanding critical support services, and collaborating with advocacy groups and families to ensure inclusive and effective policies. Additionally, I would implement best practices from higher-ranking states and work to raise public awareness about the importance of adequately funding services for individuals with I/DD.

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

I have lived experiences with developmental disability, and I will use this experience to guide me as I consider policy and legislation.

Creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and supported is one of my goals as a leader. I want constituents with developmental disabilities and their families and friends to know that their needs and voices are a top priority for me. I am committed to advocating for policies that ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

I believe every individual deserves the opportunity to live a fulfilling life and contribute to our community. Inclusivity, equity, and respect are core values that guide my work. I will fight for increased funding for support services, work to eliminate barriers, and promote awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by those with developmental disabilities. Your experiences and insights are invaluable, and I am dedicated to listening and learning from you to create policies that truly reflect your needs.

Thank you for your trust and partnership as we work towards a more inclusive and equitable future for all.