2026 Congressional Candidate Survey

Questions for Congressional Candidates — The Arc of Washington

The Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities

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1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has an intellectual/developmental disability? (I/DD) If yes, would you describe its impact on you and your candidacy? If not, what have you learned about people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and how has it impacted your candidacy?

Yes, I am a developmentally disabled candidate. I am autistic and have a learning disability. This lived experience is the foundational lens through which I view the world, and it directly drives my candidacy. I know firsthand what it means to navigate a society built without our accommodations in mind, and I understand the deep importance of self-advocacy and community infrastructure. If elected, I will make history as one of the first openly developmentally disabled members of Congress in world history.

My personal identity fuels my professional life as a special education paraeducator in the Marysville School District, where I work daily with

students who have diverse learning and developmental needs. Because of my own journey, I connect with them on a deeper level, celebrating their potential while clearly seeing the systemic gaps their families face. This commitment extends into my local leadership roles on the Snohomish Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee, the Homes and Hope Community Land Trust, and the Housing Hope Policy Committee. For too long, decisions about our community have been made without us at the table. I am running to change that and be a direct voice for us in Washington D.C. Nothing about us without us.

2. What policies and systems are you aware of that impact the lives of people with IDD and their families? If elected, what responsibility would you have to change those policies or systems?

I am intimately familiar with the federal and local safety nets because I navigate them daily. As an individual on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) who utilizes Section 8 housing for my family of six, relies on a live-in caretaker, and survived homelessness for two decades, I know exactly how punishing these bureaucratic systems are. I see how a lack of federal funding pushes IDD adults into housing instability and forced isolation. Furthermore, through my professional work, I see how Congress consistently fails to meet its forty percent funding commitment for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), while severely low Medicaid reimbursement rates have triggered a direct shortage of Direct Support Professionals, leaving families to carry the immense burden of long-term care alone.

If elected, my responsibility is to use my lived experience as a roadmap to legislate real structural solutions. I will aggressively fight to fully fund special education at the federal level so schools have the resources they need for true inclusion. I will champion bills like the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act and push to eliminate outdated income and asset rules across all federal benefit programs so individuals can work and save money without risking their life-sustaining healthcare, housing, or care infrastructure. My job will be to ensure that disability rights are treated as foundational civil rights.

3. If elected, what are your top three priorities, and how would people with IDD and their families benefit from each priority?

My first priority is fully funding the IDEA to meet the federal government's forty percent funding commitment. As a paraeducator, I see how underfunded school districts are forced to stretch minimal resources. Securing this funding ensures public schools can hire adequate support staff, provide specialized training, and deliver robust P-21 inclusive education. This guarantees IDD students receive a high-quality education and a smoother transition to adulthood, while removing the burden from families who are currently forced to constantly battle an under-resourced system.

My second priority is modernizing federal benefit programs and expanding accessible housing. Navigating SSDI and Section 8 housing myself has shown me how archaic federal rules restrict independent living. I will fight to eliminate outdated income and asset limits across all federal benefits so IDD individuals can work, save money, and build financial security without risking their housing or healthcare. Our support programs should be like Universal Basic Income, no income limits and direct money into our bank accounts. This will give individuals true financial autonomy and drastically expand affordable, integrated housing options that prevent forced isolation. I would also fully fund SSI, SSDI, and housing programs so there are no waiting lists. For section 8, increase the total amount per voucher and make it so disabled people can challenge voucher limits locally by showing samples of housing in a region instead of waiting over six months for HUD to approve the higher rate.

My third priority is stabilizing our care infrastructure by increasing federal Medicaid matching funds to raise wages for Direct Support Professionals and care workers. Because the current system relies on low reimbursement rates, we face a severe caregiver shortage, forcing families, including my own, as my caretaker is a family member, to act as unpaid, twenty-four-seven support. Elevating care positions into sustainable, well-paying careers ensures IDD individuals receive reliable, high-quality care, while finally giving family caregivers necessary respite and a functional community safety net. On top of that, passing Medicare for All. Healthcare is a human right.

4. When you have questions about how to best support people with IDD and their families, what or who are your trusted resources?

My primary and most trusted resources are self-advocates and the families themselves that I meet directly. As an autistic individual on SSDI who uses a live-in caretaker, I know that lived experience is the ultimate authority on what policies actually work. In my daily life as a special education paraeducator, I listen directly to my students and their parents to understand where the system is supporting them and where it is failing. I also rely heavily on the firsthand insights of local residents and advocates I collaborate with through my service on local housing policy and coordination committees, who keep me grounded in the immediate, real-world needs of our community. I attend dozens of events every year, including traveling to Washington D.C. and Olympia to fight for our rights.

In addition to direct community input, I trust the policy analysis and data provided by dedicated advocacy organizations within Washington State. This includes looking to The Arc of Washington State, the Community Advocacy Coalition, and self-advocacy networks like the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council. By combining the systemic data from these trusted organizations with the raw, everyday realities of local families and self-advocates, I ensure that my policy decisions in Congress will always be informed by the people who actually have to live with the outcomes.

5. Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) are Medicaid services that are essential for individuals with IDD. They provide support for daily living (such as bathing, dressing, eating, and managing medication), having a job, accessing the community, and giving families a break from providing 24/7 care. Currently HCBS services are optional but nursing home services are an entitlement. The average US cost per year for a nursing home is $111,000, compared to $17,000 to provide in-home supports. Currently, HCBS services are under threat because of the HR1 cuts to Medicaid. Many states have years-long waiting lists for HCBS services. Do you support strengthening Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and making them an entitlement? Why or why not?

I absolutely support strengthening Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and making them a mandatory federal entitlement. Our current system operates on a flawed model that treats institutional nursing homes as a guaranteed legal right, while treating the very services that allow IDD individuals to live independently in their own neighborhoods as optional. This structural bias makes no fiscal sense and violates the spirit of civil rights. As the data shows, allowing people to receive care in their homes is vastly more cost-effective than institutionalization. By forcing HCBS to remain an optional waiver program, the federal government has directly caused the years-long waiting lists that leave thousands of families struggling without necessary daily support.

The threat to these lifelines has been severely magnified by the federal Medicaid funding cuts enacted under HR1, which strain state budgets and put optional programs like HCBS at immediate risk. As an autistic individual who relies on a live-in caretaker to maintain my independence, I know firsthand that community-based care is a fundamental necessity for daily survival and human dignity. In Congress, I will push to pass legislation to elevate HCBS to a permanent, mandatory Medicaid entitlement. Doing so will permanently eliminate waitlists, protect these programs from federal budget battles, and ensure that every IDD individual has a guaranteed legal right to choose home and community-based support over forced institutionalization.

6. People with IDD frequently rely on The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program as their basic source of income. SSI has not been updated since 1984. Currently, individuals on SSI will lose their benefits if they have assets of more than $2000 (Excluding their home and care) and married couples can only have $3000. This creates a disincentive for individuals with IDD to marry. Do you support raising the asset limit, and eliminating the "marriage penalty" for recipients of SSI? Why or why not?

I strongly support completely eliminating asset limits and the "marriage penalty" for recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The current asset thresholds have not been significantly updated in nearly four decades, actively forcing IDD individuals into state-mandated poverty just to retain the life-sustaining healthcare and long-term support services tied

to SSI eligibility. These archaic limits make basic financial security impossible, preventing individuals from saving for an emergency or building any form of independent stability. Furthermore, restricting a married couple to a combined three thousand dollars means two individuals lose twenty-five percent of their allowed asset capacity simply by getting married, forcing them to choose between legal marriage and basic economic survival.

Our federal safety net should encourage independence and family stability, not punish it. In Congress, I will proudly co-sponsor and champion the bipartisan SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act to completely eliminate these restrictive savings penalties. Beyond eliminating asset caps, we must actively defend the integrity of the program against aggressive administrative rule changes that seek to claw back or cut benefits for disabled adults who choose or need to live with family members. Forcing IDD individuals to choose between poverty, forced bachelorhood, or isolation is a profound violation of their basic civil rights, and I will fight to modernize SSI so it serves as a true stepping stone toward financial autonomy and dignity.

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

I want my constituents, their families, and their friends to know that I am running to make history as the first openly developmentally disabled member of Congress. For far too long, the laws and funding structures dictating our daily lives, our healthcare, and our housing have been drafted behind closed doors by people who have never had to survive on a fragile federal safety net. My perspective is shaped by the everyday realities of a working-class, neurodivergent life. I know exactly what it feels like to navigate the anxiety of benefit asset caps, the paperwork hurdles of housing assistance, and the systemic gaps in our public school classrooms. When I stand on the floor of the House of Representatives, I will be carrying our shared, lived experiences directly into the halls of power.

True representation means having a voice at the table that cannot be ignored or placated by empty political promises. Our community has spent decades asking for basic accessibility, fair wages for our care workforce

and ourselves, and the simple right to marry or save money without risking our survival. Disability rights are foundational civil rights, and it is time we had a representative who treats them as such. I am running for Congress to ensure that our federal government finally sees us, respects us, and guarantees us the resources to live safely and independently within our neighborhoods. Policy should never be made about us without us, and I promise to be the unrelenting, direct voice that forces Congress to finally listen to our community.

Because the political establishment is engineered to gatekeep public office from disabled people, I successfully used the Americans with Disabilities Act to request fee and signature waivers to secure my own place on the federal ballot. Using the signature waivers during COVID to prove that it was a reasonable accommodation in Washington state. I am actively turning this experience into a comprehensive, open-source guide for the disability community to run for office, and I stand ready to assist and already do support disabled people who want to take that leap into public office. I need volunteers, organizers, and grassroots support to help me on the ground. I invite everyone who believes in true systemic access to join us, build this pipeline to power for the disabled community, and help us rewrite the rules of representation. We need your accommodations and support.