



Questions for Legislative Candidates- The Arc of Washington

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Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities

The Children's Campaign Fund

1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has an intellectual/developmental disability (IDD)? 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?

I have a child who has been diagnosed with mental health issues, and I struggle with them myself. I do not have family experience with individuals with IDD but have interacted with individuals during my volunteer work throughout the years that live with IDD. I have found that interacting with people who learn and function differently from me has taught me patience and how to see the human experience in many different and beautiful ways. I feel that this experience guides me when I am trying to elevate the voices of people who may not always have the capacity to speak for themselves.

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 only minimally aware of the systems and programs that people with IDD have to navigate, or the impact it has on them and their families. I feel it is the responsibility of our elected officials to educate themselves as frequently as possible on the vast array of needs of those they represent. I make an effort to interact with agencies that serve individuals living with life experiences I myself have not had and do my best to learn from them how best to help and support.

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

I want to focus on accessibility and allowing it to become a more fluid system that focuses on interaction and direct accommodation so that businesses and communities can spend less time and resources on trying to meet an arbitrary goal and instead focus on connection and understanding of the people they serve and work with. I feel that the benefit from this approach will be felt by everyone, but especially those with disabilities that simply want to function as normally as possible within their community.

I want to focus on making needed adjustments to the tax revenue of Washington state. The use tax system that we presently have creates an unnecessary burden on families already struggling to afford the basic necessities. For families and individuals living with disabilities this burden can be so much more, as the ongoing need for equipment, specialized housing, etc. gets taxed at every stage. This makes the cost of things unattainable for a lot of people.

I also want to focus on helping to instate a form of Universal healthcare. A lot of times individuals with disabilities of all sorts find themselves paying an exorbitant amount of their income (which is usually fixed) on necessary appointments, medications and treatments. This creates a status of poverty that is nearly impossible to get out of. I want to help take the burden of healthcare off the plate of people and their families.

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

If I have a situation where I am working directly with an individual with IDD or their family my first source will be them. I feel that asking how I can support them will guide me to the right organizations or other professionals that will

have the skills and knowledge to further instruct me. My secondary source would be to reach out to neighborhood non-profits that work directly with the IDD community.

5. The national trend -- and legal mandate --- supports transitioning individuals with IDD out of institutional settings and into community-based care, which is not only the best practice but also the most cost-effective approach. Studies consistently show that community-based services cost significantly less per person than institutional care while providing greater independence and quality of life. In Washington the cost of care in a Residential Habilitation Center (RHC) is more than double the cost of equivalent services in community settings.

Although Washington has made progress, continued efforts are needed to align with best practices, civil rights, federal priorities, and fiscal responsibility. Transitioning more individuals into community-based care will allow the state to reinvest savings into services for much needed community-based services.

How do you believe Washington state should approach investment in home and community based services for people with IDD in the next five years?

I agree that home and community based services are the best practice where that is possible. I have spent the past 15 years volunteering with various community non-profits; and one thing I have found consistently is the case, they don't need me to tell them how to do the job. I feel that the non-profit community is not given enough credit when it comes to their ability to manage what is needed. They need resources and support from their legislature, not more people telling them what to do. I would focus on supporting and helping the organizations that already exist within the community, they have the infrastructure, they have the trust of their clients, they just need resources and support to be able to do what they already do, just better.

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

While my life has not placed me in a position to have much knowledge about the IDD community I am always willing and eager to learn. I want to know how

I can help you to help yourself. Most people don't need to be told how to live, they just need to be given the space and resources. I would be honored to be a source of that support and resources.