



Many Voices / One Vision



Questions for Legislative Candidates- The Arc of Washington

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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?**

My experience is professional, and it started with young kids. I cofounded Parkview Early

Learning Center in Spokane in 2014. It serves more than 100 children today. We also co-founded Glow Early Learning Center inside Lumen High School, which serves 125 children of teen parents.

In that work, I saw how much early intervention and the right staffing change a child's path.

When a delay gets caught early and a family gets real support, the child does better in

kindergarten and for years after. When it gets missed, the cost shows up later, for the child and for all of us.

That is also why I have pushed hard on special education. Kids who need extra support have civil rights under state and federal law, and Washington is not meeting them. I back closing the special education funding gap, and I have said so to educators across this district.

I want to be straight about one thing. I am not the parent or sibling of a person with IDD. I come to this as someone who has worked next to families and educators, not someone who has lived it inside my own home. I plan to keep learning from the people who have.

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?

The lives of people with IDD run through a handful of systems, and most of them are under strain right now.

Medicaid is the big one. It pays for health care and for the long-term supports many people with IDD rely on their whole lives. The federal government is moving to cut it. I back SB 5233 and HB 1445 to shore up Medicaid at the state level, and I will fight to keep Apple Health whole for the more than two million Washingtonians who count on it, including people with disabilities.

Then there is the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the home and community-based waivers it runs. Too many families wait for services they have already been found eligible for.

Special education is another. I support closing the roughly billion-dollar special education funding gap that OSPI has called out. These are children with civil rights, and the state is not meeting its duty to them.

And there is early intervention. I have pushed to add early learning for ages two through five to the state's definition of basic education, because catching a delay early changes everything that comes after.

My responsibility as a legislator is direct. I write and vote on the budget that funds these systems. I can hold the line on Medicaid, fund special education and the DDA waivers, and make sure Eastern Washington gets its fair share instead of an afterthought.

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

Protect Medicaid and long-term supports. Medicaid is the floor under health care and the services people with IDD use across a lifetime. I back state-level Medicaid protection through SB 5233 and HB 1445 and will defend Apple Health from federal cuts. The benefit is simple: families keep the care and the supports they already depend on, instead of losing them to a decision made in Washington, D.C.

Fully fund special education and early intervention. I support closing the special education funding gap and adding early learning for ages two through five to basic education. The benefit: kids with IDD get the support the law already promises them, delays get caught earlier, and families spend less time fighting the system and more time raising their child.

Housing people can afford, including accessible and supportive housing. I sit on the Spokane Land Bank board and co-founded the 5th Avenue Forward Coalition to build homes for people who get priced out. The benefit for people with IDD: more adults can live in their own community, close to the supports and the people they know, instead of being pushed to the margins or into a facility because there is nowhere else to go.

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

First, the people living it. Self-advocates and families know where the system helps and where it fails better than any agency memo. I have built my career starting with the people closest to the problem, and I would do the same here.

Second, the organizations that have carried this work for decades, including The Arc of Washington and the Community Advocacy Coalition. I would lean on them, and I would listen when they tell me a bill looks fine on paper but lands wrong on a family.

Third, the providers and the workforce. Direct support professionals, special education staff, and the home care workers in SEIU 775 who do this job every day. They see the gaps first.

And inside government, the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the staff who run the waivers. I spent four years in the Governor's office learning how to get straight answers out of state agencies. I know how to make that access work for the people I represent.

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?

Washington should keep moving in one direction: more investment in home and community-based services, and a real plan to help people who want to leave institutional settings do so.

The case is not complicated. By the state's own accounting, care in a Residential Habilitation Center costs more than double the same services in the community. People do better in their own communities, and it costs less. When you can serve someone well and spend less doing it, that is not a hard call.

So over five years I would do three things. Fund the DDA waivers so people found eligible actually get services instead of sitting on a waitlist. Pay direct support professionals and home care workers a wage that keeps them in the job, because a waiver means nothing if no one is there to provide the care. And reinvest the savings from every community transition back into community services, not into the general fund where it disappears.

I will also say the honest part. This only holds if we protect Medicaid. If Congress cuts it, the whole structure wobbles. That is why I back state-level Medicaid protection and why I will defend it from the House floor.

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

One thing. I run early learning centers, so I have watched what happens when a family gets the right support early, and what happens when they do not. The difference can be a whole life.

People with IDD are neighbors, students, coworkers, and members of my community. The real measure of this state is not how it treats the people it was built around. It is how it treats the people it was not. I will keep that in front of me in Olympia, and I will keep listening to the families and self-advocates who know this work better than I do.

Thank you for the work you do.