

2022 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire



Name

Cara Cusack

District Number

19

Position (Representative or Senator)

Representative

Email *

thepeopleforcaracusack@gmail.com



1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has a intellectual/developmental disability (IDD), and if so, would you describe its impact on you? If not, what impact do you want to have for people with IDD and their families?

I do have a few personal connections. I have 8 children, some of which were adopted from very difficult backgrounds with minor intellectual and developmental disabilities, mostly due to childhood trauma. One of my friends has a neurodiverse son that is the best friend of my 10 year old son. I also have a grandson who is neurodiverse and he is one of the brightest lights in my life. I also just accepted a position as Director of Product with Aspiritech, a non-profit that employs neurodiverse individuals. They are a very activist centered organization and support my desire to run for office and make a change. The most important impact I hope to have for people with IDD is in our education system. We need to work towards more educational programs that encourage acceptance of diversity and inclusivity and eliminating the train of bullying. We must pay our teachers as if they are one of our most important resources. Schools need funding to be able to have fewer students per classroom so that they can focus on education and reduction of bias and bullying. We need better access to mental healthcare for both children and adults by funding more counselors in our schools. Most schools in the 19th District have only 1 counselor per 300-500 or more students. This makes it almost impossible for them to manage things like bullying, assault or depression and keeping our children safe. I want to make make sure that all people, regardless of their differences, have an equal opportunities in all areas of life.

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

My top 3 priorities are:

1. Women's rights to their own reproductive freedom. A woman's right to have access to abortion must be protected at every level. We must provide funding for Planned Parenthood and the very important work they do in all areas of reproductive health care to make sure that economic or social status does not hinder their right to proper healthcare. We must protect the laws in place that protect this right and strengthen them. We have see that this can be taken away in an instant, and it is vitally important that we ensure protections at every level.

2. Mental Health Care

We need better access to mental health care for children. Bullying and depression are epidemics in this country and our children are paying the price. If you have had to try to get mental health care for a child, you know how difficult it is. Mental health should be treated just like any other health care need. We need funding to encourage more providers and establish programs to encourage more in the field. We also need to have access to mental health professionals in our schools.

3. Affordable - equitable Housing

This is a problem that requires a multi faceted approach. For more affordable house, we need to stop allowing corporations to come in and buy out entire neighborhoods for cash and push hardworking families out of the market. We need to innovate to build faster and lower costs and cut down on some of the regulatory barriers.

Landowners should be able to build additional ADU's if they have the space without restrictions of one per property. We also need programs to help new buyers qualify for and obtain mortgages.

Persons with disabilities, people of color, especially Black and Native American people, are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, and evictions.

3. If cuts became necessary due to a recession or economic downturn, how would you protect services that people with IDD and their families need?

I would not support any policies that cut services for people with IDD. I believe that these programs will lower costs in the long term by helping them achieve independence to the greatest degree possible.

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

One of the hardest things for me, especially when my children were younger, was getting them mental health care and it is still very difficult. It is heartbreaking for a parent to see their child suffer and feel so helpless in getting them the care they need. This must be solved. We must create programs and policies to get more people into this field and encourage them to focus on educating themselves to work with children. Access to mental health care for all is a big part of many of the policies I wish to sponsor and support.

Your Campaign Website

<https://www.caracusack.com>