



2020 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Presidential Candidate:

In 2020, approximately 23% of the American electorate — over 35 million individuals — will be people with disabilities. As people with disabilities, we want to live independent lives and contribute our talent and energy to the future success of our great nation. There are over 60 million Americans with disabilities who make remarkable and valuable contributions to our communities.

Despite these contributions and despite our numbers, Americans with disabilities continue to face discrimination in many arenas including employment, housing, transportation, health care, and education. Candidates for public office must address these disparities and set forth a vision to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities and our full inclusion in society.

In an effort to inform our community of your disability policy positions, initiatives, and priorities, the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#) (AAPD), the [National Council on Independent Living](#) (NCIL), and the [REV UP Campaign](#) have developed this presidential candidate questionnaire. We believe the issues addressed in this questionnaire are vital to ensuring all individuals with disabilities have an opportunity to achieve the American Dream and therefore we request your response.

We greatly appreciate your time and attention to our concerns. If you have any questions, please contact Keri Gray, Sr. Director, AAPD, 202-521-4310, kgray@aapd.com or Sarah Blahovec, Disability Vote Organizer, NCIL, 724-309-5182, sarah@ncil.org.

We look forward to sharing your responses with the 35 million eligible voters of the disability community!



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Executive Summary

Please insert an executive summary describing your top 2-3 policy priorities, and how you will advance the full community integration of people with disabilities.

1. LEADERSHIP

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) publication, “High Risk Series” (2015), points out the vast problems of administration and effectiveness of federal disability programs. These very same problems have been cited in previous reports spanning over twenty years. To address these issues, reform must begin within the Executive Branch.

- a. Will you commit to creating a National Office of Disability Coordination to be headed by a cabinet level executive?**

Yes. As President, Bernie will create a National Office of Disability Coordination focused on coordinating disability policy making to advance the full inclusion of people with disabilities, including ensuring every aspect of our public resources are ADA compliant and that the civil rights of people with disabilities are enforced. This office will be run by a person with a disability.

- b. What are you doing to make sure qualified people with disabilities will be a part of your political team and, if elected, as part of your Administration?**

Bernie is committed to ensuring his campaign and administration look like America. That means a diverse set of backgrounds, viewpoints, and lived experiences. We will not have former corporate executives, big donors, and lobbyists in our administration. Instead, we will ensure people with disabilities are well represented in the administration and that everyone working in a Sanders administration makes it a priority to fight for the rights of people with disabilities in every aspect of their lives, from the right to affordable and accessible housing; to a livable wage by ending the subminimum wage and increasing the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour; to a complete high-quality education; and to comprehensive health care as a right - including mental health care, home- and community-based services and supports.



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When Bernie is in the White House, we will return to a government of, by, and for the people – not the billionaires and giant corporations. We'll do that by building a movement – a movement with enough power to insist that all of our elected representatives return power to the people, a movement that not only identifies the deep corruption of our politics but rejects cynicism and instead insists on solutions, action and accountability. That is how we will govern. This is how we will select nominees and advisors.

2. ADVANCING THE CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES TO BE INTEGRATED IN SOCIETY

The vast majority of Americans with disabilities and older Americans prefer home and community based services that allow them to live independently in their communities. However, states and insurance providers of Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) still restrict access to community-based services and preference nursing homes, which results in unwanted institutionalization, depriving people with disabilities of their fundamental freedoms and cutting their lives short. This reliance on institutional placement is also far more expensive than community-based services.

- a. If elected, will you support the Disability Integration Act (currently S.117/HR.555) – bipartisan civil rights legislation that establishes in statute the right of Americans with LTSS disabilities to receive services and supports in the community and be integrated in society – and sign this legislation into law? What other investments will you make in expanding long-term services and supports?**

Yes, Bernie is a proud co-sponsor of the Disability Integration Act. He firmly believes that no one should have to choose between being taken out of their homes and communities or being denied the support they need to survive and thrive. Bernie is committed to fulfilling the promise of the Olmstead decision by ensuring that all people with disabilities have access to both home and community-based services, mental health care, and accessible, affordable housing to ensure they can enjoy their right to live in the community. In a Bernie Sanders administration, the Olmstead decision will be vigorously enforced through the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, reversing the Trump Administration's disgraceful rollback of disability rights enforcement.

As President, he will end the institutional bias that forces people with disabilities out of their communities by passing the Disability Integration Act and enacting Medicare for All, guaranteeing home-and community-based services, assistive technologies, and mental health care to all, without asset or income restrictions.



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- b. People with disabilities are also significantly overrepresented in prisons and jails. A few key reasons for this disparity is police discrimination, lack of accommodations in the court system, jails functioning as hospitals, particularly for behavioral health, and inadequate re-entry support.¹ How will you address the disproportionate number of people with disabilities, who are also often people of color, that are institutionalized in jails and prisons? In what ways will you transform our criminal justice system?**

According to the Department of Justice, one in five inmates in prisons are people with a cognitive disability, while another one in five inmates have a serious mental illness. Instead of incarceration, we should be providing people with disabilities with the services and supports they need to stay in the community, including mental health care and home and community-based services. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it costs significantly less to provide someone with the necessary supports and services to stay in the community than it does to incarcerate them.

All too often, people with disabilities, especially people of color with disabilities, face violence from law enforcement. This requires more than just training — it requires accountability. Approximately half of all people who die in police-involved shootings have a disability. In order to protect the rights of people with disabilities, we intend to make discriminatory law enforcement interactions with people with disabilities a major enforcement priority of the Civil Rights Division. When Bernie is President, he will:

- Recognize the humanitarian crisis in our country created by the incarceration of people with mental illness, we will use the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision to challenge states that have failed to adequately support the voluntary, community-based mental health services that can divert people with mental illness from ending up in the criminal justice system.
- Bar criminal charges for school-based behavior that would not otherwise be criminal and invest in school nurses, counselors, teachers, teaching assistants, and small class sizes to address disciplinary issues. We will ensure every school has the necessary school

¹ Vallas, R. (2016). "Disabled Behind Bars: The Mass Incarceration of People With Disabilities in America's Jails and Prisons." The Center for American Progress. Found through <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/15103130/CriminalJusticeDisability-report.pdf>.



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counselors and wrap-around services by providing \$5 billion annually to expand the sustainable community school model.

- Work with teachers, school administrators, and the disability rights movement to end restraint and seclusion discipline in schools.
- Invigorate and expand the compassionate release process so that people with disabilities are transitioned out of incarceration whenever possible.
- Invest in diversion programs as alternatives to the court and prison system for people with disabilities and ensure those people have the community-based supports and services they need.
- Stop the criminalization of homelessness and make the necessary investments to end homelessness. This includes doubling McKinney-Vento homelessness assistance grants to build permanent supportive housing, and \$500 million to provide outreach to homeless people to help connect them to available services. In the first year of this plan, 25,000 Housing Trust Fund units will be prioritized for housing the homeless.
- Create an Office of Disability in the DOJ focused on coordinating these efforts, including the reduction of incarcerated people with disabilities, reducing recidivism and guaranteeing a just re-entry for people with disabilities, and ensuring every aspect of our criminal justice system is ADA compliant.
- And we will invest in community living.

- c. **Americans with disabilities face many obstacles and barriers to voting, including inaccessible polling places and voting equipment, difficulty getting to the polling place, and poorly informed election officials and poll workers about access issues. What will you do to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to the fundamental right to vote? Do you support providing funding to states so they can purchase new accessible voting systems to replace the first generation accessible voting systems that have outlived their useful life?**

Yes. When Bernie is President, we will ensure no person with a disability experiences discrimination or barriers to living a full and productive life by enforcing the Americans with



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Disabilities Act and expanding access to basic civil rights owed to people with disabilities, including the right to accessible polling places. Bernie will work with disability rights groups, voting rights advocates, and security experts to ensure our election infrastructure is accessible and secure.

In order to do so, he will:

- Abolish restrictive voter identification laws, which discriminate against voters with disabilities as well as voters of color.
- End misuse of the ADA to close polling places in areas such as Randolph County, Georgia. Instead of closing and relocating polling places in an area without public transit, we will retrofit polling places to make them accessible or find nearby options that are more accessible.
- Secure automatic voter registration for every American over 18.
- Restore the Voting Rights Act.
- Provide funding to increase and improve poll worker training on how to interact with voters with disabilities.

We will also ensure every voter has access to accessible, private, and expansive voting options by:

- Working with disability rights groups, voting rights advocates, and security experts to pass ballot security legislation which ensures accessible voting options for people with disabilities. Paper ballot mandates must not segregate voters with disabilities from the rest of voters. We must ensure poll workers do not bar someone from using accessible voting options on whether or not they "appear disabled enough" and that anybody who wants to vote on secure, accessible voting devices is allowed to do so.
- Ensure there is no requirement for "hand-marked" paper ballots, which are inaccessible for many people with disabilities. As you know, for people with disabilities, hand-marked paper ballots mean that they will have someone else have to fill out the ballot for them, which is not secure, independent or private.
- Allocating funding for research in accessible mail-in ballot options, such as using systems in place for military and overseas voters. As states expand mail-in options, the same issues in lack of privacy apply, as many mail-in ballots must be handmarked. We must make these mail-in ballot options accessible to all.
- Provide funding for research, development, and testing of new accessible voting technology. Our election infrastructure hasn't been updated in many cases since 2001,



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many systems are outdated and being decertified due to security issues. We will also ensure that funding for research and development of new election equipment is not restricted to inaccessible systems so that we can move towards secure, accessible voting equipment that serves all voters.

- Providing funding to states so they can purchase new accessible voting systems.

- d. **The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that an estimated 32 percent of state and federal prisoners and 40 percent of local jail inmates have a disability, and that this population is three to four times more likely than the general population to report having at least one disability. Furthermore, there are significant racial disparities in incarceration rates, with African Americans incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites. There are significant efforts around the country to restore voting rights for returning citizens (those who have completed all terms of their sentence.) As President, what would your Administration do to advance the restoration of voting rights for returned citizens?**

Bernie firmly believes every American over the age of 18 should have the fundamental right to vote. He also understands that the last decade, more than 30 states have considered voter suppression laws whose clear intent is to disenfranchise people with disabilities and people of color. As president, he will end voter suppression in this country and move to automatic voter registration. He will make voting easier, not harder. We are going to:

- Restore the Voting Rights Act.
- Re-enfranchise the right to vote to the 1 in 13 African-Americans who have had their vote taken away by a felony. That includes restoring the right to vote for those currently incarcerated, as it is a fundamental American right.
- Secure automatic voter registration for every American over 18.
- End racist voter suppression and partisan gerrymandering.
- Abolish burdensome voter ID laws.
- Make Election Day a national holiday.
- Ensure voting is fully accessible.

- e. **Tens of thousands of people with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities have been disenfranchised in 39 states due to laws that strip them of their right to vote. What would your Administration do to encourage the restoration of voting rights for people with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities who have been denied the right to vote due to guardianship?**



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Bernie firmly believes every American over the age of 18 should have the fundamental right to vote. Period. This includes people with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, we will provide grants to incentivize states to take up supported decision making as an alternative to conservatorship and guardianship. We will ensure that states receiving funding track outcomes in order to research the implementation of supportive decision making models throughout the United States.

f. What will your administration do to ensure immigrants with disabilities have support and accommodations throughout the citizenship process?

We must live up to our ideals as a nation and make our immigration and citizenship process welcoming, accessible and broad. Bernie will streamline our visa and citizenship system and make it easier to navigate, fully accessible, and broadly inclusive. He will ensure USCIS makes disability waivers for the English and civics test broadly available and publicized. He will provide funding for integration and naturalization programs that ensure all immigrants, including those with disabilities, are welcomed into our communities and given the full benefits of citizenship, should they so choose to pursue it.

g. How will your administration ensure that immigrants are not denied citizenship on the basis of disability or public benefits?

Bernie supports a family-based immigration system grounded in civil and human rights. We should not let corporate America pick and choose who they want to come into our country. Bernie believes we must stand up for our values and accept refugees, asylum-seekers, and families who come to the United States in search of the American Dream. This is how America was built and it has made our country strong. Bernie will immediately rescind President Trump's "public charge" rule to deny help and benefits to people based on their immigration status. And he would use executive action to allow all undocumented individuals who have been in the United States for at least five years to stay in the country without fear of deportation, which is well within the President's executive authority. Additionally, under Medicare for All, every person in the United States will be guaranteed health care as a human right, no matter their immigration status.



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- h. Judicial nominations make a significant impact on the civil rights of Americans. What qualities will you look for in judicial nominees, and will these qualities include fair-minded constitutionalists that support the rights of people with disabilities?**

President Trump's court appointments are a rubber-stamp for an extreme, right-wing agenda pushed by corporations and billionaires. The debate on who should be appointed to our courts is about the future of the disability rights movement, the trade union movement, Roe v. Wade, public education, campaign finance reform, voting rights, workers' rights, health care, environmental protection and many other important issues.

Today, the threat to our political participation and civil rights posed by the Conservative Supreme Court is just as grave as the days of Jim Crow and we must be just as engaged. This is a battle worth fighting and one we must win. Our democracy depends on it.

Any person who Bernie nominates to the court must fundamentally understand the need to protect the rights of everyone, not just a select few. That means a promise to defend the rights of people with disabilities. They must defend Roe vs. Wade and the constitutional right to an abortion. It means they vote to overturn the disastrous Citizens United decision. They must defend voting rights. And they must respect the rights of workers, which includes a commitment to overturn the disastrous Janus decision and protecting our public sector workers. And, unlike many of Trump's nominees, any justice Bernie nominates must loudly and clearly support the original Brown vs Board ruling.

3. HEALTH CARE

People with disabilities rely on both public (Medicaid) and private insurance options to obtain coverage to meet their health care needs. Access to affordable comprehensive health care coverage is essential for people with disabilities to live independently and maximize the quality of their lives. Unfortunately, many people with disabilities continue to lack access to the services and supports they need. In addition, despite existing legal protections, people with disabilities are subject to discrimination in both the financing and provision of health care services.

- a. What will you do to address discrimination in the financing and provision of health care services to people with disabilities? Will you make enforcement of existing health care non-discrimination protections for people with disabilities a priority?**



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Health care is not a commodity. It is a human right. The goal of a health care system should be to keep people well, not to make stockholders rich. That is why we need Medicare for All. Bernie's Medicare for All program would provide comprehensive health coverage to all with no premiums, deductibles, copayments, or surprise bills.

As President, he will address the fact that today, 11 percent of people with disabilities are uninsured. That many people with disabilities skip out on receiving the care they need because of cost.

He will end the institutional bias that forces people with disabilities out of their communities by passing the Disability Integration Act and enacting Medicare for All, guaranteeing home- and community-based services, assistive technologies, and mental health care to all, without asset or income restrictions.

When Bernie is in the White House, we will Guarantee health care as a human right by enacting Medicare for All. The plan would:

- Cover prescription drugs, assistive technologies and medical devices
- Provide transportation for individuals with disabilities to receive the care they need.
- And mental health care, under Medicare for All, will be free at the point of service, with no copayments or deductibles which can be a barrier to treatment.

He will also address our health workforce shortage crisis by increasing funding for the National Health Service Corps, which provides scholarships and loan repayment to clinicians working in underserved communities.

We will bring more providers to underserved communities by increasing federal funding for community health centers, which currently serve over 28 million people in underserved communities.

Bernie's Medicare for All plan also requires an evaluation of health disparities, including geographic disparities, and a plan for addressing the disparities found in the evaluation. It creates an Office of Primary Health to figure out how to increase access to care, including how to train the workforce we need to address these disparities.



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Medicare for All would also:

- Ban Medicaid estate recovery.
- Update the asset limit to account for inflation as it has not been updated since 1988, which determines eligibility of Medicaid institutional long term support and services.

- b. How will you work to expand access to affordable, comprehensive health care coverage for people with disabilities? What will you do to address discrimination in health care coverage against people with pre-existing health conditions, and ensure the protections for people with disabilities remain in place?**

Bernie believes that health care is a human right. Period. No one should have to choose between being taken out of their homes and communities or being denied the support they need to survive and thrive. We must no longer force people to “spend down” their savings and impoverish themselves in order to qualify for assistance. No one should lose health insurance coverage due to a pre-existing condition. Our profit-driven health care system is failing our people. Our country deserves better.

When Bernie is in the White House, he will enact Medicare for All, which will guarantee health care, including home and community based services and supports without waitlists and mental health care, as a human right to everyone in America. His Medicare for All plan will address the disparities in our system for people with disabilities that we still see in our country. Specifically, his plan requires the Department of Health to conduct an evaluation of health disparities, and to submit a plan to Congress for addressing the disparities found in the evaluation. It also creates an Office of Primary Health to increase access to care, including training the workforce we need to address these disparities. Finally, his Medicare for All plan includes explicit language that bans providers from discriminating against patients, including discrimination based on race, color, gender, and disability and allows courts to award damages to patients if this is violated. He will work to make sure every person gets the care they need.

- c. Do you have a plan for expanding health insurance coverage through a universal health care policy, and if so, how will you ensure that this policy covers the needs of people with disabilities, including long-term services and supports?**



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Bernie Sanders believes health care isn't a privilege--it's a human right. That's why he has been running on Medicare for All, a single-payer program that will guarantee comprehensive health care coverage to everyone in America. Under our current broken system, 11 percent of people with disabilities are uninsured. One-third of adults with disabilities ages 18 to 44 skipped receiving the care they need because of cost. One-fourth of adults with disabilities did not have a check-up in the past year. Under Medicare for All, everyone is covered. There are no premiums, no co-pays, no deductibles, no networks, no surprise bills. Health care will be free at the point of service. Medicare for All ends the institutional bias in our system and provides home-and community-based long-term services and supports to all people without waitlists as well as:

- Covers prescription drugs, medical devices and assistive technologies
- Provides transportation for individuals with disabilities to receive the care they need.
- Mental healthcare, under Medicare for All, will be free at the point of service, with no copayments or deductibles which can be a barrier to treatment.
- Require an evaluation of health disparities, including geographic disparities, and a plan for addressing the disparities found in the evaluation. And create an Office of Primary Health to figure out how to increase access to care, including how to train the workforce we need to address these disparities.

When Bernie is in the White House, we're going to bring down the outrageous costs in our health care system by eliminating the profits of giant pharmaceutical and insurance companies. We're going to bring down costs for hospitals and doctors by replacing the administrative paperwork bloat of our current insurance system with a single payer--Uncle Sam. And we're going to make massive corporations like Amazon, who didn't pay a nickel in federal income tax last year, pay their fair share.

d. How will you work to improve the Medicaid program, including ensuring access to home and community based services and the elimination of the bias toward institutional services in the Medicaid program?

We are experiencing a crisis in Long-Term Services and Supports in this country. More than 700,000 people with disabilities and older adults are on waitlists to receive the home and community-based services they need. Many who need services are not even able to access the wait list, due to oppressive asset and income restrictions that force those with disabilities to spend their lives in poverty.



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Bernie believes no one should have to choose between being taken out of their homes and communities or being denied the support they need to survive and thrive. We must no longer force people to “spend down” their savings and impoverish themselves in order to qualify for assistance. Our profit-driven health care system is failing our people. Our country deserves better. We must ensure that every person with a disability has access to home and community based services and affordable, accessible housing.

Recently, the House of Representatives passed a vital reauthorization of the Money Follows the Person program, which has already helped more than 90,000 people with disabilities and older adults to leave institutions and enter community life. Bernie has called upon the Senate to pass this vital legislation swiftly, before the program expires at the end of September, and am continuing to press for re-authorization in the Senate.

As President, Bernie will end the institutional bias that forces people with disabilities out of their communities by passing the Disability Integration Act, of which he is proud to be a sponsor, and enacting Medicare for All, guaranteeing home-and community-based services and assistive technologies to all who need them, without asset or income restrictions. And under his administration, the Olmstead decision will be vigorously enforced through the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, reversing the Trump Administration’s disgraceful rollback of disability rights enforcement.

Every person with a disability deserves the right to live in the community and have access to the services and supports they need to pursue the American dream. It is our moral responsibility to make it happen.

- e. **With the continual push to block grant Medicaid (to the states), one of the unintended consequences could be the elimination or severe cut in the provision of the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) services. This would have a dramatic impact on the ability of people with disabilities in rural America to access health related services. Will you work to ensure this critical component of Medicaid remains intact?**



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Yes. Not only will we ensure that NEMT is not cut, but we will expand these services to all who need them. Medicare for All will provide transportation for individuals with disabilities to receive the care they need.

- f. **In light of the opioid epidemic, policies have been enacted to limit the use of opioids. An unintended consequence of this has been harm to people living with chronic pain.² How will you ensure that people with chronic pain have access to the full range of pain management modalities, including opioids, when they are appropriate and necessary?**

Roughly 50 million Americans struggle with chronic pain. Bernie will ensure they get the treatment they need by passing Medicare for All to guarantee health care as a human right. At the same time we address the addiction crisis in this country, we must cover the full range of pain management treatments including pain medications for people struggling with chronic pain and offer the option of evidence-based alternatives when appropriate. When Bernie is President, we will:

- Pass Medicare for All to provide pain management care and treatments to everyone with chronic pain issues. Under Medicare for All, we will stop the pharmaceutical industry from ripping off Americans by making sure that no one in America pays over \$200 a year for the medicine they need by capping what Americans pay for prescription drugs. We will follow CDC guidance on pain management to ensure people with chronic pain receive the medication they need, and offer the option of evidence-based alternatives when appropriate. And we will educate providers on evidence-based best practice treatment options for chronic pain conditions.
- Make significant investments in funding for addiction treatment, recovery, prevention, and research. When we are in the White House, we will provide communities across the country struggling with the epidemic of addiction with the money and resources they need to address this issue while ensuring people receive the pain medication they need.
- And we need to remove the greed and profit motive from pharmaceutical companies, who willfully ignored the risks of misuse and hold those responsible accountable by passing the Opioid Crisis Accountability and Results Act. This bill will:
 - Prevent illegal distribution of opioids and large unreasonable number of opioids from flooding rural communities and states.

² Dowell, D, Haegerich, T, & Chou, R (2016) "CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain," Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Found through <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html>.



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- Hold CEOs of drug companies criminally liable for illegal advertising, marketing, or distribution of opioids
- Penalize drug manufacturers who do not comply with the new regulations by eliminating patent exclusivity and require federal funds received by the company to be reimbursed to the government.
- Create and enforce fines on drug manufacturers who are found liable for worsening the opioid crisis.

g. Does your administration support the federal legalization of marijuana and how will your administration decriminalize the marijuana industry?

Yes. The disastrous policies that make up the War on Drugs have not reduced drug use and violent crime, but have destroyed lives and disproportionately impacted people of color. As President, Bernie will legalize marijuana and vacate and expunge past marijuana convictions, and ensure that revenue from legal marijuana is reinvested in communities hit hardest by the War on Drugs.

h. In the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of psychiatric hospitals, even as the Department of Justice has found, and many state governments have acknowledged, that significant numbers of people with psychiatric disabilities have hospital admissions that could be avoided or shortened if sufficient community-based services were available. What will you do to ensure that people with psychiatric disabilities are afforded the services they need to succeed in their own homes and communities and avoid psychiatric hospitalization?

Bernie is committed to fulfilling the promise of the Olmstead decision by ensuring that all people with disabilities have access to both community-based mental health care, home and community-based services and accessible, affordable housing to ensure they can enjoy their right to live in the community. Bernie believes every person with a disability deserves the right to live in the community and to the services and supports they need to pursue the American dream. It is our moral responsibility to make it happen.

In a Bernie Sanders administration, the Olmstead decision will be vigorously enforced through the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, reversing the Trump Administration's disgraceful rollback of disability rights and disability rights enforcement.



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Instead of continuing a for-profit health care system that upholds institutional bias, Bernie will guarantee every person has access to home- and community-based health care services, including primary and mental health care. Medicare for All provides home-and community-based services to all.

And we will go further to address our health workforce shortage crisis by increasing funding for the National Health Service Corps, which provides scholarships and loan repayment to clinicians working in underserved communities. He will significantly expand funding for community-based health care facilities to underserved communities by increasing federal funding for community health centers, which currently serve over 28 million people in underserved communities.

4. REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT AND ENSURING EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

People with disabilities experience one of the highest rates of unemployment of any marginalized group, and these rates are highest for multiply marginalized people with disabilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was at 8%, which is more than two times higher than the 3.7% unemployment rate of people without disabilities.³ The next Administration must make employment and economic empowerment for people with disabilities a top priority.

REHABILITATION ACT

Although legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act has served to advance and expand the opportunities of people with disabilities in the workforce, there are still many barriers that must be considered and overcome to increase employment for people with disabilities to comparable levels for people without disabilities.

- a. **What will you do to strengthen Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act and ensure the federal government is a model employer of people with disabilities?**

Bernie knows that we, unfortunately, still live in a world where people with disabilities have fewer work opportunities, are sometimes forced to work in sheltered workshops where they are paid as little as 2 cents per hour, and experience much higher rates of poverty. Nearly

³ "Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics - 2018." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 26 February 2019. < <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf> >.



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twenty-four percent of adults with disabilities are living in poverty—close to double the official poverty rate.

According to a recent report, “35.5 percent of the population with disabilities (ages 18-64) were employed. In contrast, the employment-to-population ratio of people without disabilities was 76.5 percent, nearly double that of people with disabilities.” The median wage for full-time workers with disabilities is \$5,000 less than the median wage for full-time workers without disabilities. When Bernie is in the White House we will:

- Expand President Obama’s executive order to make the federal government a model employer for people with disabilities.
- Create equitable hiring standards. We will ensure that all the federal government follows standards and guidelines to ensure the jobs created by the federal government including infrastructure jobs are available to people with disabilities.
- End subminimum wage certificates for individuals with disabilities, raise the minimum wage to a livable wage of at least \$15 an hour, and expand grants to ensure employment for workers with disabilities in their communities.
- Enact a federal jobs guarantee that will pay a living wage to all persons with disabilities who want to work through the program.

b. How will you ensure the provisions under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act will be fully enforced by the Department of Labor and that Federal contractors will meet their affirmative action obligations under the law?

Bernie will ensure everyone working in a Sanders administration makes disability rights a priority. A Bernie Sanders administration will restore workers’ rights, especially for people with disabilities, to bargain for better wages, benefits, working conditions, and to hold employers accountable. Bernie will appoint a Labor Secretary who will aggressively enforce the provisions under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and ensure that Federal contractors meet their affirmative action obligations under the law.

COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

Many people with disabilities are underemployed. People with disabilities who are working earn less on average than workers without disabilities with similar education levels. The median earnings for workers



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with disabilities is less than two-thirds the median wages for workers without disabilities (Disability Statistics & Demographics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 2011). Furthermore, Section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act authorizes employers to pay sub-minimum wages to workers who have disabilities, and many are still stuck working in segregated sheltered workshops. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) made a commitment to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), which refers to work where people with disabilities earn the same wage as people without disabilities, have the same benefits and opportunities for advancement, and work alongside people without disabilities.

c. Do you plan to phase out Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act?

Yes. When Bernie is President, he will end the disgraceful subminimum wage for individuals with disabilities, raise the minimum wage to a livable wage of at least \$15 an hour, and expand grants to ensure employment for workers with disabilities in their communities.

He will guarantee all persons with disabilities a livable wage, and guarantee truly integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Period.

d. How will you expand supported employment services to people with disabilities?

Bernie is a strong supporter of expanding truly integrated employment opportunities for all people and when he is President, we will guarantee good-paying, union jobs to all who want to work through a federal jobs guarantee and the Green New Deal. He will expand grants to states and municipalities to ensure employment and employment services for workers with disabilities in their communities. Medicare for All will also cover supported employment services, expanding on coverage available in state Medicaid programs.

e. How do you plan to build an infrastructure to address the underemployment and wage gap experienced by people with disabilities?

At a time when, adults with disabilities are twice as likely to lack adequate transportation at 31 percent than adults without disabilities at 13 percent and 560,000 people with disabilities report they do not leave home because of transportation difficulties, we must guarantee safe and accessible transportation for people with disabilities.



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With a \$300 billion investment in the Green New Deal to build public transit that is affordable, accessible, fast, and resilient, we will increase public transit ridership by 65 percent by 2030. We will ensure that reliable, affordable public transit is accessible for people with disabilities, seniors, and rural communities. We will address the current crisis in ADA compliance in our infrastructure by investing trillions of dollars to rebuild our infrastructure and make it ADA compliant. We will also make sure that standards and guidelines are in place to ensure the jobs created by investing in infrastructure are jobs available to persons with disabilities.

f. Are you committed to supporting competitive integrated employment? Will you support legislation such as the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (H.R. 873/S. 260)?

Yes. Bernie believes this legislation is a good start to addressing the lack of work opportunities for people with disabilities, that people with disabilities are often forced to work in sheltered workshops where they are paid as little as 2 cents per hour, and that people with disabilities experience much higher rates of poverty.

As President, Bernie will go further to ensure every person who wants to work is guaranteed a good-paying, union job. We will end the disgraceful subminimum wage for individuals with disabilities, raise the minimum wage to a livable wage of at least \$15 an hour, and expand grants to ensure employment for workers with disabilities in their communities. Medicare for All will also cover supported employment services, expanding on coverage available in state Medicaid programs.

TRANSITION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Youth with disabilities often find themselves distanced from the opportunities to learn job skills through work in their formative years leading to unemployment and underemployment throughout their lives.

g. How do you plan to engage youth with disabilities in pre-employment opportunities that will lead to successful transition from school to work and/or higher education?

When Bernie is President, he will increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment. He will cancel all student debt and guarantee tuition and debt free public colleges, universities, trade schools and apprenticeship programs and the end equity gap in higher education attainment for people with disabilities by



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ensuring all our students get the help they need so they are ready for college and receive the support they need when they are in college.

Over 40 years ago, the federal government made a promise to school districts around the country to fund 40 percent of the cost of special education. It is an understatement to point out that the federal government has not come close to keeping this promise.

Special Education is an expensive proposition and because of inadequate federal funding, property taxes around the country are increasing while kids with disabilities are not getting the attention they deserve. The IDEA helps about 6.5 million children with disabilities, but because of a chronic lack of funding there is a shortage of special education teachers and physical and speech therapists, and the turnover rate among them is incredibly high.

Students with disabilities deserve the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Unfortunately, too many receive a substandard education that fails to ensure they get a chance to live up to their full potential. Worse still, students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, are often subject to dangerous restraint and seclusion or are funneled into the school to prison pipeline through the inappropriate use of law enforcement within our schools.

From childcare and Pre-K to Higher Education, students with disabilities should have the opportunity to be fully included and access a high-quality education that prepares them for a future of their choosing.

As president, Bernie Sanders will:

- Provide universal childcare and early education for all to properly invest in our children's healthy physical, social, educational, and cognitive development.
- Provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education and 100 percent of the funding for special education services delivered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom.
- Guarantee children with disabilities an equal right to high-quality education by enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment.



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- Address the shortage in special education teacher recruitment, training opportunities, workload, and pay for special education teachers.
- Triple Title I funding to ensure students with disabilities are able to get quality education regardless of the zip code they live in.
- Ensure our schools are accessible by fully closing the gap in school infrastructure funding to renovate, modernize, and green the nation's schools.
- Work with teachers, school administrators, and the disability rights movement to end restraint and seclusion discipline in schools. We will pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act, vital legislation to protect students with disabilities against restraint, seclusion and aversives.
- Address disciplinary practices in schools that disproportionately affect Black and Brown children and children with disabilities.
- Address racial disproportionality in special education services by fully implementing the Obama-era regulations on special education disproportionality.
- Invest in expanding access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students who need additional communication assistance.
- Ensure that Deaf students have access to American Sign Language and blind students have access to braille literacy.

h. How would you reform the public workforce system to ensure people with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, are fully integrated into the economic development of regional economies?

We must address the lack of work opportunities people with disabilities face. People with disabilities are often forced to work in sheltered workshops where they are paid as little as 2 cents per hour, and experience much higher rates of poverty.

As President, Bernie will go further to ensure every person who wants to work is guaranteed a good-paying, union job. Bernie will:

- Expand President Obama's executive order to make the federal government a model employer for people with disabilities.
- Create equitable hiring standards. We will ensure that all the federal government follows standards and guidelines to ensure the jobs created by the federal government including infrastructure jobs are available to people with disabilities.



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- End subminimum wage certificates for individuals with disabilities, raise the minimum wage to a livable wage of at least \$15 an hour, and expand grants to ensure employment for workers with disabilities in their communities.
- Enact a federal jobs guarantee that will pay a living wage to all persons with disabilities who want to work through the program.

ENSURING APPROPRIATE FLEXIBILITY IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKFORCE

Of the federal and state expenditures combined for working age people with disabilities, 41 percent is spent on income benefits (e.g., SSI and SSDI) and 55 percent on health care (Medicaid and Medicare). 1.2 percent of federal and state expenditures go to educating, training, and employment programs for people with disabilities.

- With 4.6 million people with disabilities on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and 8.9 million people on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), how would your Administration reform these federal income support programs so people with disabilities can receive income supports while working so they can secure employment or return to employment sooner?**

More than one in four 20 year-old Americans will incur a disability before reaching retirement age. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is an earned benefit that covers more than 150 million workers and lifts millions of persons with disabilities and their families out of poverty. Currently, the SSDI program faces a massive backlog and a wait time for applicants that can stretch into years. Thousands of Americans have died waiting for a hearing. This is unacceptable. The United States spends far less than other rich nations on assistance for persons with disabilities. We must ensure dignity for Americans with disabilities by expanding benefit levels and giving them access to their earned benefits in a timely manner.

Additionally, Supplemental Security Insurance provides a small but crucial lifeline for those with disabilities and low incomes, including children. SSI supports 1.2 million children with disabilities, lifting hundreds of thousands out of poverty and substantially reducing deep poverty. But SSI benefits do not even reach the federal poverty line and has been targeted for cuts by Trump and the GOP. We must protect and expand SSDI and SSI for those who need it the most.

As president, Bernie will:



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- Protect and expand the Social Security Disability Insurance program and end the massive disability backlog to end wait lists for persons with disabilities to access their earned benefits.
 - Expands benefits across-the-board for all Social Security beneficiaries, including SSI. And increase and index the SSI benefit level so that it is equal to 125 percent of the poverty line.
 - Eliminate the SSI asset test. It is unacceptable that we force people with disabilities to spend down so they qualify for SSI and force recipients off the program if they see a small sum of money come in that puts them over the asset threshold. When we are in the White House, we will eliminate the asset threshold to ensure people with disabilities get the benefits they need.
 - Bring back student benefits for children of deceased workers and workers with disabilities that were eliminated in 1983.
 - Combine the Social Security Disability Insurance Trust Fund and the Old Age and Survivors Trust fund to protect benefits.
 - Issue a moratorium on all closures of field offices and other SSA offices.
 - Remove the marriage penalty from benefits.
 - Remove barriers and disincentives to work for benefits recipients.
- j. **Medicaid eligibility and programmatic requirements now create barriers for individuals with disabilities entering or returning to the workplace because they cannot access needed supports such as personal care attendants, power wheelchairs, complex rehab technology, other rehabilitation devices and services, home and community based services, medical supplies, and therapies. Do you support initiatives that would allow workers with disabilities to continue to work past age 65, maintain eligibility from state to state, and carry their Medicaid benefits into private employment settings? How would you work with the private sector to address the critical independent living supports that many private insurance programs do not cover for people with disabilities?**

Bernie believes in the United States, the wealthiest country in the history of the world, every person has the right to a secure retirement. In order to achieve that other rights must be afforded, like the right to health care, an education, a good job, affordable housing, and a clean environment.

When Bernie is President, we will guarantee comprehensive health care as a right to all people - regardless of income, age, or employer. Since Medicare for All will be available without asset



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or income tests, people with disabilities will no longer be forced to choose between employment and health-care.

k. How will your administration preserve the benefits of SNAP, TANF?

More than 11 million people with disabilities rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. President Trump has repeatedly tried to cut vital assistance programs and make it harder for people to figure out where their next meal is coming from. We must reject these absurd proposals, and focus on expanding programs that help lift people out of poverty. At a time when tens of millions of Americans are already struggling to put food on the table, we are not going to cut these programs. Instead, we are going to expand them to ensure no one in the United States goes hungry.

We will protect and expand SNAP benefits to make sure that all people in this country don't have to worry about where their next meal comes from. We will expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by \$311 billion to increase the benefits from the "thrifty" plan which provides inadequate benefits to the more generous "low-cost" food plan, include those with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty line, remove punitive work requirements, remove barriers for college students to access SNAP, and ensure people are not denied benefits due to past interaction with the criminal justice system. We will also expand the SNAP program and benefits to the people of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa so they are on par with the benefits in the continental United States.

l. Food insecurity and barriers to economic opportunity disproportionately impact people with disabilities. What will your administration do to preserve programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)?

We will protect and expand SNAP and TANF benefits to make sure that all people in this country don't have to worry about losing these critically important benefits or where their next meal comes from.

5. EDUCATION

Due to the enactment and implementation of a key civil rights law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, or the "special education" law), high school graduation rates for people with



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disabilities have increased 45 percent since 1995, with an associated decrease in dropout rates for students with disabilities. Similarly, enrollment in college has doubled for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, local school districts struggle to serve students with disabilities and students with disabilities seeking a higher education continue to face enormous barriers to success, and high school and college graduation rates for students with disabilities remain lower than their able-bodied peers.

IDEA FUNDING

When IDEA was passed in 1975, Congress pledged to fund 40% of the differential cost of serving students with disabilities. The closest the federal government has come to meeting that pledge is 19% in 2010. Higher levels of funding will ensure more students with disabilities receive the supports they need in K-12, are able to complete high school, and have the opportunity to go on to postsecondary education and postsecondary employment.

a. Do you support funding IDEA at higher levels?

Yes. Bernie will provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education, with additional financial incentives to encourage schools to serve students within the general education classroom.

Over 40 years ago, the federal government made a promise to school districts around the country to fund 40 percent of the cost of special education. It is an understatement to point out that the federal government has not come close to keeping this promise.

Special Education is an expensive proposition and because of inadequate federal funding, property taxes around the country are increasing while kids with disabilities are not getting the attention they deserve. The IDEA helps about 6.5 million children with disabilities, but because of a chronic lack of funding there is a shortage of special education teachers and physical and speech therapists, and the turnover rate among them is incredibly high.

Students with disabilities deserve the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Unfortunately, too many receive a substandard education that fails to ensure they get a chance to live up to their full potential. Worse still, students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, are often subject to dangerous restraint and seclusion or are funneled into the school to prison pipeline through the inappropriate use of law enforcement within our schools.



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From childcare and Pre-K to Higher Education, students with disabilities should have the opportunity to be fully included and access a high-quality education that prepares them for a future of their choosing.

As president, Bernie Sanders will:

- Provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education and provide funding incentives to encourage special education services delivered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom.
- Provide universal childcare and early education for all to properly invest in our children's healthy physical, social, educational, and cognitive development.
- Guarantee children with disabilities an equal right to high-quality education by enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment.
- Address the shortage in special education teacher recruitment, training opportunities, workload, and pay for special education teachers.
- Triple Title I funding to ensure students with disabilities are able to get quality education regardless of the zip code they live in.
- Ensure our schools are accessible by fully closing the gap in school infrastructure funding to renovate, modernize, and green the nation's schools and ensure they are fully accessible.
- Address disciplinary practices in schools that disproportionately affect Black and Brown children and children with disabilities.
- Work with teachers, school administrators, and the disability rights movement to end restraint and seclusion discipline in schools.
- Address racial disproportionality in special education services by fully implementing the Obama-era regulations on special education disproportionality.
- Invest in expanding access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students who need additional communication assistance.
- Ensure that Deaf students have access to American Sign Language and blind students have access to braille literacy.



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- b. What will you do to ensure that children with disabilities are afforded equal educational opportunity, including the services they need to be educated alongside non-disabled peers in their neighborhood schools rather than being placed in separate schools and separate classrooms?**

Students with disabilities deserve the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Unfortunately, too many receive a substandard education that fails to ensure they get a chance to live up to their full potential. Worse still, students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, are often subject to dangerous restraint and seclusion or are funneled into the school to prison pipeline through the inappropriate use of law enforcement within our schools.

When Bernie is President, we will:

- Provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education and provide funding incentives to encourage special education services delivered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom.
- Work with teachers, school administrators, and the disability rights movement to end restraint and seclusion discipline in schools.
- Guarantee children with disabilities an equal right to high-quality education by enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Triple Title I funding to ensure students with disabilities are able to get quality education regardless of the zip code they live in.
- Ensure our schools are accessible by fully closing the gap in school infrastructure funding to renovate, modernize, and green the nation's schools and ensure they are fully accessible.

CURRICULUM AND TRANSITION

In some localities, students with disabilities are not taught the challenging curriculum available to students without disabilities.

- c. How would you ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to ambitious educational opportunities that other students have?**

Bernie will ensure we are adequately investing in and granting the same educational opportunities to students with disabilities as their non-disabled peers. To do so he will:



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- Increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment.
- Provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education and 100 percent of the funding for special education services delivered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom.
- Triple Title I funding to ensure students with disabilities are able to get quality education regardless of the zip code they live in.
- Address the shortage in special education teacher recruitment, training opportunities, workload, and pay for special education teachers.
- Invest in expanding access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students who need additional communication assistance.
- Ensure that Deaf students have access to American Sign Language and blind students have access to braille literacy.

d. How would you increase the number of high school graduates with disabilities and what would you do to ensure more college graduates with disabilities secure employment and are hired by the private sector?

When Bernie is President, he will increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment. He will cancel all student debt and guarantee tuition and debt free public colleges, universities, trade schools and apprenticeship programs and the end equity gap in higher education attainment for people with disabilities by ensuring all our students get the help they need so they are ready for college and receive the support they need when they are in college.

Bernie will guarantee everyone in our country basic economic rights – the right to quality health care, the right to as much education as one needs to succeed in our society, the right to a good job that pays a living wage, the right to affordable housing, the right to a secure retirement, and the right to live in a clean environment.

We must recognize that in the 21st century, in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, economic rights are human rights.



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ELIMINATING BULLYING

Bullying of students with disabilities is a long-standing problem. In fact, over 85 percent of students with disabilities have experienced some form of bullying.

- e. Do you support amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to protect young students with disabilities from bullying, require state educational agencies and local school districts systems to report incidents of bullying, and to provide interventions to reduce bullying?**

Our schools must be safe for all students. Period. We must ensure students with disabilities can attend school without fear of bullying. We must work with teachers, school administrators, and the disability rights movement to end bullying in schools. We will pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act into law to protect the rights of students with disabilities. And we will protect students from harassment, discrimination, and violence in educational institutions by protecting and enforcing Title IX.

PROHIBITING THE USE OF RESTRAINTS AND SECLUSION

The use of physical restraints and seclusion is a prevalent issue in public schools. There are many reports that show adults who restrain students with disabilities are tying, taping, and trapping students in chairs and equipment, forcing them into locked seclusion rooms, and depriving them of necessities.⁴

- f. Do you support the Keeping All Students Safe Act? How would your Administration address the issues around restraint and seclusion in schools?**

Yes, we will pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act, which is a vital legislation to protect students with disabilities against restraint, seclusion and aversives.

EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities frequently lack access to the general education classroom.

- g. What steps will you take to expand access to the general education classroom and broader inclusion for students with disabilities?**

⁴ Diament, M (2018) "Feds Release New Stats On Restraint And Seclusion In Schools," DisabilityScoop. Found through <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2018/04/24/feds-restraint-seclusion-schools/25015/>.



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We will provide mandatory funding to ensure that the federal government provides at least 50 percent of the funding for special education services delivered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom, with additional financial incentives to further incentivize schools to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. We will also:

- Increase educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, including an expansion in career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for good-paying community employment.
- Triple Title I funding to ensure students with disabilities are able to get quality education regardless of the zip code they live in.
- Invest in expanding access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students who need additional communication assistance.
- Ensure that Deaf students have access to American Sign Language and blind students have access to braille literacy.

h. What would you do to make sure students with disabilities have accessible curriculum and that teachers have the support they need to provide it?

We will make sure teachers have adequate resources and support they need to provide high-quality education to students with disabilities. We will Invest in expanding access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students who need additional communication assistance and ensure that Deaf students have access to American Sign Language and blind students have access to braille literacy. We will also address the shortage in special education teacher recruitment, training opportunities, workload, and pay for special education teachers.

6. AFFORDABLE, INTEGRATED, and ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

The ADA's integration mandate and the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision provide people with disabilities with critically important rights — to live, work, and receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate. These rights have enabled tens of thousands of people with disabilities to move from institutions into their own homes and communities, and to get the services they need to secure real jobs at competitive wages in the community. Despite this, the lack of enforcement has resulted in 700,000 disabled



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people being wait-listed to receive home and community-based services; 70,000 disabled people still being institutionalized; and 1.5-7 million disabled people still living in nursing homes.⁵

- a. **Enforcement by the Department of Justice has been particularly important, although it has been dependent on the priorities of each Administration. Would you make robust enforcement of the ADA’s integration mandate and Olmstead decision a priority in your Administration?**

Yes. Bernie firmly believes that no one should have to choose between being taken out of their homes and communities or being denied the support they need to survive and thrive. Bernie is committed to fulfilling the promise of the Olmstead decision by ensuring that all people with disabilities have access to both home and community-based services, mental health care, and accessible, affordable housing to ensure they can enjoy their right to live in the community. In a Bernie Sanders administration, the Olmstead decision will be vigorously enforced through the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, reversing the Trump Administration’s disgraceful rollback of disability rights enforcement.

- b. **The lack of affordable, accessible housing has taken an egregious toll on the lives of people with disabilities who continue to be warehoused in nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, board and care homes, DD (developmental disabilities) institutions, and other institutional settings. Disabled individuals want housing in mainstream buildings (or scattered-site housing) and not “special” buildings for “special” people. As President, what will you do to address the need for affordable, integrated accessible housing for people with disabilities?**

When Bernie is in the White House, he will guarantee people with disabilities have safe, accessible, and integrated affordable housing as a right. It is not acceptable that many people with disabilities are spending 50 percent or more of their limited incomes to put a roof over their heads, leaving little money for food, transportation, health care services or medicine. It is not acceptable that many people with disabilities in our country are homeless on any given night. It is not acceptable that people with disabilities face housing discrimination in the year 2019. It is not acceptable that our current system forces people with disabilities to choose between being taken out of their homes and communities or being denied the support they need to survive and thrive. When Bernie is President, he will ensure that every person with a

⁵ Kaiser Family Foundation (2017) “Waiting List Enrollment for Medicaid Section 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services Waivers” Found through <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/waiting-lists-for-hcbs-waivers/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>



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disability has access to home and community based services, and he will guarantee safe, accessible, and integrated housing and end housing discrimination. He will:

- Build affordable, accessible homes to end the 7.4 million unit shortage of affordable housing.
- Vigorously enforce the Olmstead decision through HUD and the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, reversing the Trump Administration's disgraceful rollback of disability rights enforcement. And aggressively defend and promote the legal protections of fair housing, and make sure that no one is denied housing based on disability, race, color, national origin, religion, or gender.
- Aggressively enforce the Olmstead decision, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure access to accessible, integrated housing.
- Fully fund tenant-based Section 8 rental assistance and make it a mandatory funding program for all eligible households. In doing so, we will end waitlists for the program.
- Ensure all new Section 811 housing is fully integrated.
- End the institutional bias that forces people with disabilities out of their communities by passing the Disability Integration Act, of which Bernie is proud to be a sponsor, and enacting Medicare for All, guaranteeing home-and community-based services and assistive technologies to all who need them, without waiting lists or asset or income restrictions.

We look forward to working with the disability rights movement to guarantee decent, accessible, integrated, safe housing as a human right.

7. TRANSPORTATION

Access to affordable and reliable transportation allows people with disabilities important opportunities to go to school, work, take care of their health, live where they desire, and participate in all aspects of community life. Because our nation's investments in transportation infrastructure have disproportionately favored vehicles and highways, those who cannot afford vehicles or do not operate vehicles often lack viable transportation options.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Access to public transportation is a key to independence and full community participation for people with disabilities.



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- a. **What would you do to expand access to affordable and accessible transportation for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas?**

At a time when, adults with disabilities are twice as likely to lack adequate transportation than adults without disabilities and 560,000 people with disabilities report they do not leave home because of transportation difficulties, we must guarantee safe and accessible transportation to the disab community.

With a \$300 billion investment in the Green New Deal to build public transit that is affordable, accessible, fast, and resilient, we will increase public transit ridership by 65 percent by 2030. We will ensure that reliable, affordable public transit is accessible for people with disabilities, seniors, and rural communities. We will address the current crisis in ADA compliance in our infrastructure by investing trillions of dollars to rebuild our infrastructure and make it ADA compliant. We will also make sure that standards and guidelines are in place to ensure the jobs created by investing in infrastructure are jobs available to persons with disabilities.

And Bernie will build regional high-speed rail. Many other developed nations have advanced high speed rail systems. He will make a \$607 billion investment in a regional high-speed rail system that would complete the vision of the Obama administration to develop high-speed intercity rail in the United States. This new system will give travelers a meaningful affordable alternative to plane or car travel between major cities. The reason high-speed rail has not worked in the United States is because we have not built the political mobilization needed to demand the funding needed to complete this vision. Together, we will create the movement needed to develop high-speed rail.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORKING COMPANIES

Transportation networking companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft have the potential to increase transportation options for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, TNCs have discriminated against people with disabilities by refusing rides to individuals with service animals and individuals using wheelchairs.

- b. **What would your Administration do to ensure all people with disabilities have access to the services provided by TNC's?**

Bernie believes it should not be a radical idea to guarantee everyone - regardless of disability - equal protection under the law and that we must end discrimination in all forms. We must



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ensure no person with a disability experiences discrimination or barriers to living a full and productive life by fully enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

As autonomous or self-driving vehicles move towards becoming a reality, they promise new mobility options and increased independence for people with disabilities who have missed out on the benefits of a century of automotive history.

- c. **What will your administration do to ensure that the automobile industry begins to build personal passenger cars that are accessible to a wide range of people with disabilities, including those that use wheelchairs?**

Through the Green New Deal, we will make massive investments in public research and development to drastically reduce the cost and increase the accessibility of electric vehicles, especially for people with disabilities.

Within the newly established Climate Justice Resiliency Fund in the Green New Deal, we will establish an Office of Climate Resiliency for People with Disabilities. The office will be led by people with disabilities to ensure that nationwide, the needs of people with disabilities are consistently addressed during adaptation planning and that those efforts are coordinated throughout the federal government.

We will also provide \$2.09 trillion in grants to low- and moderate-income families and small businesses to trade in their fossil fuel-dependent vehicles for new electric vehicles. As president, Bernie will make sure nobody is left behind and the benefits of this transition are prioritized in communities who have too often been neglected.

AIR TRAVEL

Air travel can be complicated for everyone, but people with disabilities encounter many additional barriers to air travel. From the time they enter the airport, they are faced with obstacles that not only result in frequent delays and missed flights, but they also put their dignity and safety at risk. People with disabilities frequently experience inaccessible facilities and equipment in airports, overly intrusive and discriminatory TSA security screenings, breakage of mobility and medical equipment, unsafe and harmful transport and transfers by airport staff, inaccessible aircraft facilities and amenities, and additional fees. Air travel can be extremely difficult for people with disabilities, including those who must travel for work, sometimes rendering it nearly impossible.



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d. As President, what would you do to address this issue?

Bernie strongly believes that every person in the United States should have the right to safe, affordable, and accessible transportation - without fear of discrimination. Period. He will ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are strictly enforced through the ADA. We will invest in airport infrastructure to make sure our airports are fully accessible. And we will work with the disability rights community, the Department of Transportation, and TSA to remove barriers to air travel for people with disabilities.

We will also build regional high-speed rail. Many other developed nations have advanced high speed rail systems. A \$607 billion investment in a regional high-speed rail system would complete the vision of the Obama administration to develop high-speed intercity rail in the United States. This new system will give travelers a meaningful affordable alternative to plane or car travel between major cities. The reason high-speed rail has not worked in the United States is because we have not built the political mobilization needed to demand the funding needed to complete this vision. Together, we will create the movement needed to develop high-speed rail.

With a \$300 billion investment in the Green New Deal to build public transit that is affordable, accessible, fast, and resilient, we will increase public transit ridership by 65 percent by 2030. We will ensure that reliable, affordable public transit is accessible for people with disabilities, seniors, and rural communities. We will ensure all new infrastructure built through the Green New Deal be ADA compliant and will work to address the current crisis in ADA compliance in our infrastructure. We will also make sure that standards and guidelines are in place to ensure the jobs created by investing in infrastructure are jobs available to persons with disabilities.

8. TECHNOLOGY

Accessible mainstream communication and information technologies, as well as assistive and adaptive technologies, often allow people with disabilities to secure and maintain employment, participate in educational activities, and experience entertainment like everyone else.

SECTION 508 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

The U.S. Congress enacted Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973, a statute that requires the federal government to purchase information technology that is accessible to and usable by employees with



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disabilities in the federal government and by customers with disabilities accessing federal government services online. Despite this long standing requirement, many federal websites and online government services remain inaccessible to users who are blind, people with low vision, people with intellectual disabilities, and other disabilities.

- a. **Would you make it a priority to ensure federal agencies make their websites and all other information technology accessible? How will you implement this?**

Yes. As President, Bernie will create a National Office of Disability Coordination focused on coordinating disability policy making to advance the full inclusion of people with disabilities, including ensuring every aspect of our public resources, including websites and information technology are ADA compliant and that the civil rights of people with disabilities are enforced. This office will be run by a person with a disability.

THE INTERNET OF THINGS

The Internet of Things, including smart homes and other connected devices, has the potential to increase the independence and community integration of people with disabilities. Connected devices are being developed and released for sale at breakneck speed with new devices coming to market often without any accessibility or usability requirements. Universal design and accessibility features must be included in these devices in order for the Internet of Things to realize the potential it has to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. Under Title II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities have access to modifications, accommodations, and auxiliary aides or services to participate in the activities and services of both local and state government and places of public accommodations, a protection that currently does not exist on the Internet of Things.

- b. **What will you do to ensure that people with disabilities have the same access to the Internet of Things as provided to non-disabled individuals?**

As President, Bernie will build affordable, publicly owned broadband infrastructure to ensure everyone has accessible high speed internet access. High-speed Internet access is no longer a luxury. It is essential for 21st century commerce, education, telemedicine, and public safety. We will provide \$150 billion in infrastructure grants and technical assistance for municipalities and states to build publicly owned and democratically controlled, co-operative, or open access broadband networks. As President, Bernie will develop regulations to ensure people with



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disabilities have the same access to the Internet of Things as provided to non-disabled individuals.

- c. What steps will your Administration take to address the digital divide to ensure that all people with disabilities have access to the Internet, including those that rely on social security income supports?**

As President, Bernie will build affordable, publicly owned broadband infrastructure to ensure everyone has accessible high speed internet access. High-speed Internet access is no longer a luxury. It is essential for 21st century commerce, education, telemedicine, and public safety. We will provide \$150 billion in infrastructure grants and technical assistance for municipalities and states to build publicly owned and democratically controlled, co-operative, or open access broadband networks. As President, Bernie will develop regulations to ensure people with disabilities have the same access to the Internet of Things as provided to non-disabled individuals.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Climate change is intensifying the frequency and duration of disasters around the world, including in the United States. In 2017 and 2018, the U.S. experienced 122 major disasters. People with disabilities and older adults are disproportionately impacted by disasters, during which, they are two to four times more likely to die or be injured. Yet, disability and aging communities are excluded from disaster preparedness, planning, response, and recovery.

Since hurricane Katrina, over \$700 billion dollars in federal funding has been spent on disaster related preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation initiatives. However, federal oversight and enforcement have failed to ensure compliance with the equal access requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

- a. Under your leadership, what policy changes will you make to ensure people with disabilities have full access to programs and resources before, during, and after disasters?**

As President, Bernie will ensure justice for people with disabilities to recover from, and prepare for, the climate impacts, including through a \$40 billion Climate Justice Resiliency Fund. He will provide frontline and fenceline communities a just transition including real jobs, resilient infrastructure, economic development.



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Once the CJRF is established and funded at \$40 billion, the EPA, together with a number of other agencies, will conduct a nationwide survey to identify areas with high climate impact vulnerabilities and other socioeconomic factors, public health challenges, and environmental hazards. Each community will then be eligible for funding in order of most vulnerable to least vulnerable.

The interagency council will issue block grants to states, territories, tribes, municipalities, counties, localities, and nonprofit community organizations. The funds will be able to be used for climate resiliency projects, building emergency community centers and shelters with reliable backup power, wetland restoration, abandoned fossil fuel infrastructure and other environmental hazard reclamation; seawalls; community relocation; community evacuation plans and resources for safe and complete evacuation.

Within the CJRF, we will establish an Office of Climate Resiliency for People with Disabilities. The office will be led by people with disabilities to ensure that nationwide, the needs of people with disabilities are consistently addressed during adaptation planning and that those efforts are coordinated throughout the federal government.

As President, Bernie will ensure the creation and implementation of the Green New Deal is accessible to people with disabilities and non-English speakers. All publications will be in multiple languages, including Braille, and meetings will have language interpreters, including sign language, as appropriate.

b. If elected, will you support the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion in Disasters Act (READI) and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRM)?

Yes. As President, Bernie will establish an Office of Climate Resiliency for People with Disabilities. The office will be led by people with disabilities to ensure that nationwide, the needs of people with disabilities are consistently addressed during adaptation planning and that those efforts are coordinated throughout the federal government. And he will pass Medicare for All to guarantee health care as a human right and ensure that people forced to relocate across state lines after a disaster do not have to worry about any complications with their health coverage. In the wake of a disaster, no one should have to worry about losing their



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health coverage. We must guarantee health care as a human right and end this injustice once and for all.

- c. As President, will you empower and adequately resource your Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to monitor and enforce all disability civil rights obligations before, during and after disasters?**

A Bernie Sanders administration will provide the resources necessary to monitor and enforce all disability civil rights obligations before, during, and after disasters. Every single political appointment Bernie will make will be deeply committed to championing the rights of people with disabilities and reverse the Trump Administration's disgraceful rollback of disability rights enforcement.