



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!

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.

A central goal of my campaign is ending Washington corruption so that our government works for everyone, not just the interests of billionaires, lobbyists, and big corporations. Our government works great for the wealthy and well-connected, but it's not working for everyone else, including families struggling to pay medical bills, individuals incarcerated instead of receiving adequate mental health care, and those kept from making a living wage. The first thing we need to do is end corruption in Washington. Every day in Washington corruption tilts decisions -- big and small -- in favor of giant corporations and the wealthy. My Anti-Corruption bill – the biggest anti-corruption bill since Watergate – also tackles the influence of money in politics head on.

Additionally, my Ultra-Millionaire Tax asks the richest 0.1% of Americans to pay a 2% tax on every dollar above \$50 million in wealth and 3% on every dollar above \$1 billion in wealth, bringing in nearly \$3 trillion in revenue that we can use to pay for things like Universal Child Care, student loan debt cancellation, universal free public college, and ending the opioid crisis. By asking the wealthy and well-connected to pay their fair share we can fund these proposals that would help level the playing field for everyone, including people with disabilities. I also support Medicare for All, which would ensure comprehensive health care coverage for all Americans, including for community-based, long-term services and supports.

Building an America that reflects our values means elevating the voices of those who have traditionally been overlooked and underserved. We've got to make sure everyone has a seat at the table and I will do that in a Warren Administration. I support a National Office of Disability Coordination to help oversee the coordination of legislation, regulations, and other agency activities to ensure federal programs better work together to support people with disabilities. I will continue to hire people with disabilities on my campaign, and I'll work to make sure our government works for everybody, And I will keep fighting for the rights of people with disabilities through policy reforms and enforcement priorities, including the ones I detail in this questionnaire.

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.

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

People with disabilities are touched by many different federal programs, and I agree that ensuring smooth administration of these programs is an essential part of meeting the needs of this community. I support creating a National Office of Disability Coordination to help oversee the coordination of legislation, regulations, and other agency activities to ensure that federal programs better work together to support people with disabilities in the United States.

- 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?

I believe that universal inclusion begins within our campaign and pledge that my campaign – and my administration – will be fully inclusive of people with disabilities. On my campaign, we have a staff member who prioritizes outreach to the disability community so that our campaign is deliberately listening and taking intentional steps towards inclusion. Some of the steps we've already taken include: hiring individuals with disabilities, making sure our offices and event spaces are accessible, prioritizing phone and texts banks alongside canvases so that people of all mobilities can participate, ensuring that all photographs on our website have alt-text and that our videos include captions, and asking event attendees about their accessibility needs and reaching out to those individuals directly to confirm what they need so that we can accommodate them on the day of the event. I will continue to hire people with disabilities in my campaign, and I'll work to make sure our government works for everyone. .

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.

- 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, I am an original co-sponsor of the Disability Integration Act, which aims to end the institutional bias and prohibits private insurance companies and government entities from denying the right to home and community-based services to seniors and those with disabilities. I firmly believe in the right of those with mental illnesses and disabilities to live and participate in their communities. And I support Medicare for All, which would ensure comprehensive health care coverage for all Americans, including for community-based, long-term services and supports.

- 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

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>.

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?

To protect the most vulnerable, we need real reform of our criminal justice system: from what we choose to criminalize, to how law enforcement and prosecutors engage with communities and the accused, to how long we keep people behind bars, how we treat them when they're there, and how we reintegrate them when they return.

The solution for someone experiencing a mental health crisis should not be a badge and a gun, but police officers have become America's de facto first mental health providers. People with mental illnesses are not incarcerated at higher rates because they are prone to violence -- to the contrary, most are arrested for non-violent offenses, many because they lack access to necessary services. Instead of shuttling people into a system not built to meet their needs, we should invest in appropriate community-based treatment to prevent people from reaching those crisis points in the first place. Medicare for All will provide continuous access to critical mental health care services, decreasing the likelihood that the police will be called as a matter of last resort. I'll also increase funding for "co-responder" initiatives that connect law enforcement to mental health care providers and experts. And my administration will pilot evidence-based crisis response efforts to provide needed services to individuals struggling with mental illness.

Our prison system is not meeting the government's basic responsibility to keep the people in its care safe. We must provide accommodations and protections for prisoners with disabilities, including limiting restrictive housing. I'll implement a rigorous auditing program to ensure that prisons are adhering to legal requirements to protect people with disabilities from abuse while incarcerated, and prosecute prison staff who engage in misconduct. I've co-sponsored the Solitary Confinement Reform Act, which would reform the practice of solitary confinement and create a Civil Rights Ombudsman tasked with protecting the civil rights of those who are incarcerated. As president, I'll eliminate the use of solitary confinement for protective purposes, and direct the Bureau of Prisons to establish a set of standards and reforms to protect the most vulnerable in our prison system.

My administration will establish a federal standard for law enforcement use of force, incorporating proven approaches and strategies like de-escalation that can protect individuals with disabilities. We'll help police departments hire a diverse police force, and provide training and resources to help them meet high federal standards, including training on engaging individuals with cognitive or other disabilities. I'll provide funding for language and cultural competency training, including on gender identity and treatment of individuals with disabilities, so that public defenders are best able to serve their clients. And I'll work to reverse discrimination in reentry, including by reversing the guidance that exempts privately run re-entry programs that contract with the Bureau of Prisons from anti-discrimination laws, and restoring protections for individuals with disabilities and those that encounter discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- 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?

Voting should be easy. Under my Democracy Restoration Plan, the federal government will provide every polling location with accessible ballot machines for people with disabilities and conduct research into how to improve voting security and accessibility for all people, including those with disabilities. I will also eliminate barriers that make voting more difficult by making Election Day a national holiday, requiring all federal elections to have a minimum of 15 days of early voting, expanding voting hours, allowing the option to vote with a sworn statement of identity instead of an ID, having convenient polling locations, and voting by mail. And we will pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Native American Voting Rights Act to shut down a host of festering discriminatory practices.

- 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?

Yes, I believe the federal government should act to re-enfranchise those who have served their time and left prison.

- 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?

The right to vote is a fundamental right. We need to clarify the conditions under which a citizen is placed under guardianship, rather than letting judges make arbitrary determinations that deny thousands of Americans with mental health conditions and disabilities their constitutional right to vote, and when available, we should advocate supported decision-making so that individuals can exercise this fundamental right.

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

I've proposed establishing an Office of New Americans dedicated to supporting new immigrants, including those with disabilities, as they transition into our society and economy, and task that office to draft a national strategy for integration. We should provide English, civics, and employment-focused classes and training for

immigrants who want to enroll, and work with faith groups and other community organizations to provide support services for refugees and asylees, providing the tools to make it easier for newcomers to integrate into their communities. I will put additional layers of protection in place for asylum seekers, including those with disabilities, ensuring that they can safely present themselves at ports of entry for humane processing and streamlining processes to eliminate the backlog of individuals waiting for an adjudication.

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

I will fight to ensure that no person is denied access to critical public services because of their immigration status. I have opposed the new public charge rule. When the draft rule change was published, I sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security expressing my concerns about the devastating consequences this would have on immigrant communities and urging its withdrawal, and I have also supported the Protect American Values Act, which would block implementation of this rule. This proposal has already had a chilling effect -- immigrants and refugees are unenrolling themselves and their children from programs they qualify for out of fear that this will jeopardize their visa status. And the repercussions are harmful to entire communities. As president, I'll withdraw this rule.

- 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?

We need federal judges who will defend equal justice for everyone, and I will fight with every bone in my body for a judiciary that is fair, equal, and just for all. I'll appoint fair-minded constitutionalist judges instead of far-right extremists. Judges who will value justice for all, not just for the rich and powerful. Judges who will defend equality for the most vulnerable among us, including people with disabilities, not roll back constitutional rights for huge swaths of our country.

The justice system should reflect the country it serves. Judicial appointments are primarily white and male, and large numbers tend to have a prosecutorial background. Diversity of background and experience matters. That's why I have pushed for increasing the professional diversity of our federal judiciary to insulate the courts from corporate capture, and why I support gender and racial diversity for judicial nominees. I'll appoint a diverse slate of judges, including those who have a background defending civil liberties or as public defenders. I've also pledged, as president, to nominate a demonstrated advocate for workers to fill any Supreme Court vacancy.

Our judiciary should also be committed to increasing transparency. Americans should be able to easily see what is happening in the judicial process, public filings should be more easily accessible and free online, and Supreme Court proceedings should be audio live-streamed. My selection criteria for federal judges, including Supreme Court justices, would prioritize someone who would adhere to this code of conduct – because everything is at stake with respect to the judiciary.

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.

- 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?

Beyond my support for Medicare for All, which would remove these discriminatory barriers to health coverage for people with disabilities, I would roll back the changes President Trump has proposed to the regulations under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. His recent proposal alters the standards for accessibility and significantly weakens these protections for people with disabilities by eliminating non-discrimination requirements for benefit design. If finalized, this rule would result in significant barriers and burdens imposed on patients and could result in many people with disabilities struggling to get the care they are due. As President, I will direct HHS to interpret Section 1557 under its 2016 guidance to fully uphold civil rights and nondiscrimination protections, and I will fight for Medicare for All to ensure that all Americans have comprehensive health care.

- 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?

I support Medicare for All, which would ensure comprehensive health care for all Americans, including for people with disabilities. Under Medicare for All, no American will be denied care due to a pre-existing condition.

- 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?

I support Medicare for All, which would ensure comprehensive health care for all Americans, including for community-based, long-term services and supports. These support services are just as important as medical services to ensure that people with disabilities can be active members of their communities and live empowered, productive lives.

- 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?

I support Medicare for All. In the transition to this system, we must also ensure that every American has the care they need to lead an independent life. That's why I have supported Medicaid expansion to ensure more people can get coverage, and I have also cosponsored the Disability Integration Act, which would require insurance providers and states that cover long-term supports and services to allow people with disabilities to receive home and community-based services and prohibit discrimination in the provision of that coverage.

- 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?

I support Medicare for All, which would ensure community-based supports for all patients. In the transition to Medicare for All, we must protect and expand Medicaid, a program that is critical for many Americans with disabilities. I strongly oppose turning Medicaid into a block grant program, and I oppose proposals that unfairly deprive people of the health care and critical support services, like non-emergency medical transportation, they need.

- 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?

Individuals with chronic pain should receive the medication they need, and Medicare for All will provide comprehensive health care for all Americans. I have cosponsored legislation to require opioid prescribers to complete safe prescribing training, and for the Department of Health and Human Services to study the effects of this training. I also fought to pass a bipartisan bill that allows opioid prescriptions to be partially filled when appropriate. These measures will help to ensure that individuals who experience chronic pain receive the medication they need.

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

I support the full legalization of marijuana and restorative justice for those unjustly jailed for minor marijuana crimes. We should delist marijuana as a Schedule I drug. I've also introduced legislation to keep the federal government from interfering in states that have legalized marijuana - medical or recreational. And I support bringing marijuana businesses into the banking system and the tax system.

- 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

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>.

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?

I am an original co-sponsor of the Disability Integration Act, which aims to end the institutional bias and prohibits private insurance companies and government entities from denying the right to home and community-based services to seniors and those with disabilities. I firmly believe in the right of those with mental illnesses and disabilities to live and participate in their communities, and my Department of Justice will fully enforce the Olmstead decision to achieve its promise. And I support Medicare for All, which would ensure comprehensive health care for all Americans, including for community-based, long-term services and supports.

We also must support today's health care workforce and build a pipeline for the future workforce. More than 75 million Americans live in health professional shortage areas, and with an aging population, we need an additional 200,000 nurses every year and nearly 3.4 million personal care aides, home health aides, psychiatric aides, and nursing assistants by 2030 to meet the growing demand. To start, I'll boost oversight of anticompetitive behavior and mergers of both for-profit and nonprofit hospitals, which often depress the wages of health professionals. I also will expand the National Health Service Corps' and the Indian Health Services' loan repayment programs to cover full loan repayment for 5 years of service in medically underserved areas. And I'll dramatically scale up apprenticeship programs that partner with unions, high schools, community colleges, tribal colleges, and a wide array of health care professionals, including psychiatric aides.

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.

A. 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.

- 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?

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>>.

- 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?

I will strengthen Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, and my administration will fully enforce Section 503 of the Act.

I will also fight to pass the Raise the Wage Act, which increases the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all workers - including tipped workers and workers with disabilities - and indexes the minimum wage to median wage growth. While I push to enact that legislation, I will sign an executive order on the first day of my administration to require all federal contractors to pay a \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

B. 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 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.

- Do you plan to phase out Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act?
- How will you expand supported employment services to people with disabilities?
- How do you plan to build an infrastructure to address the underemployment and wage gap experienced by people with disabilities?
- 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)?

I have always believed in the principle of equal pay for equal work, but today, it is perfectly legal for an employer to hire workers with disabilities and pay them below what they pay workers without disabilities for doing the same work. They can even apply for permission to pay workers with disabilities below the federal minimum wage. It's a disgrace.

I will fight to pass the Raise the Wage Act, which increases the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all workers — including tipped workers and workers with disabilities — and indexes the minimum wage to median wage growth. While I push to enact that legislation, I will sign an executive order on the first day of my administration to require all federal contractors to pay a \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

Individuals with disabilities should also have the opportunity to reach their full potential in competitive and integrated employment settings. In addition to guaranteeing workers with disabilities a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, I will push to pass the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act, which would support a transition towards competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities through grants and technical assistance.

I've also worked to help individuals with disabilities build financial security, including by supporting the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act to allow individuals with disabilities to save and pay for disability-related expenses. And I've pushed to expand the ABLE Act to benefit older individuals and allow for higher contribution limits, and to raise the outdated asset and income limits for Americans who receive benefits like Social Security Income, which prevent some individuals with disabilities from earning and saving money for no good reason.

C. 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.

- 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?
- 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 need to do everything we can to ensure that all students, regardless of means or background, have access to career training that will provide a path to a good-paying job and a shot at the middle class. That's why I introduced the Free Career and Technical Education for High School Students Act in order to direct federal funding streams toward reducing or eliminating out-of-pocket costs associated with Career and Technical Education programs for high school students, including students with disabilities. If classes that prepare high school students for college are free, then career training classes that prepare students to enter the workforce should also be free. I have also co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would expand education savings accounts to cover apprentices' out-of-pocket costs, such as for equipment and books.

D. 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?

In order to be eligible for benefits under Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the recipient has to have a severe disability or be over the age of 65 and cannot have more than \$2,000 in total assets. That is counting your bank account, your life insurance, stocks, money under the mattress, everything. And for the seniors and people with disabilities who have very low amounts of assets and very little income, SSI provides an average benefit of about \$550 a month.

These outdated asset and income limits are barriers that prevent SSI recipients from building a better future for themselves and for their families. I am a cosponsor of the SSI Restoration Act, which would allow recipients

to save up for emergencies, to earn a little more money for work and other sources without being penalized, and to receive support like food or shelter from friends and family members. These changes will help ensure that the SSI program fulfills its promise and better serves those who need it most.

I'm also a chair of the Expand Social Security caucus, and, in my plan to [expand Social Security](#), I committed to increasing benefits for all SSDI recipients by \$200 a month, which would be excluded from the unearned income threshold of other federal programs. And my plan restores adequate funding to the Social Security Administration so that it can carry out its core mission. Congress has slashed SSA's operating budget by 9% since 2010, even as the number of beneficiaries is growing. Meanwhile, SSA has a staff shortage, rising telephone and office wait times, and outdated technology. Sixty-four Social Security field offices have closed since 2011 and 500 mobile offices have closed since 2010. Field office closures are correlated with a 16% drop in disability insurance beneficiaries in the surrounding area because those people — who have paid into the system and earned their benefits — no longer have assistance to file their applications. Disability insurance applicants can wait as long as 22 months for an eligibility hearing. Thousands of people have died while waiting for administrative law judges to determine if they're eligible to receive their benefits. To make matters worse, Donald Trump issued an Executive Order that will politicize the process of selecting the judges who adjudicate these cases. And his administration keeps proposing more cuts to the SSA budget.

I'll increase funding to SSA so that they can hire more staff, keep offices open, reduce call times, update the technology system, and give applicants and beneficiaries the services they need. And I will revoke Trump's Executive Order on administrative law judges.

Growing old or having a disability should not mean struggling to put food on the table or worrying about keeping a roof over your head. We should make sure these programs live up to our values.

- 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?

I support Medicare for All, which would solve these problems and expand long term care to every American. In the transition to Medicare for All, I will fight to hold health insurers accountable, including the managed care companies that care for Medicaid beneficiaries.

- 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)?

In the richest country in the history of the world, no family should struggle to put food on the table and no child should have to go to bed hungry. As president, I will continue to fight to preserve these vital programs. I have consistently supported legislation to strengthen SNAP, including by introducing the College Student Hunger Act, which would allow more low-income college students to access SNAP and expand programs that address food insecurity.

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 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.

A. 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.

- Do you support funding IDEA at higher levels?
- 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?

Yes. I’m a co-sponsor of the Keep Our Promise to America’s Children and Teachers Act, which would fully fund the Individuals With Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act and make sure education is a priority in the federal budget. I have joined my colleagues in expressing my serious concerns to Secretary DeVos that under her leadership the Office of Civil Rights has dismissed hundreds of civil rights complaints brought forward by disability rights advocates. To close the opportunity gap, we must also make sure our public education system upholds the right to a quality education for all of our kids. That’s why I passed an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization to ensure that students with disabilities are able to use assistive technology to access assessments. It’s also why I introduced the bipartisan AIM HIGH Act to create guidelines for accessible instructional materials on college campuses. I recognize that many students face obstacles to their education, and I will always stand up for programs that help to level the playing field.

I will also equip schools with resources to meet their students’ needs by providing health care to support the physical, mental, and social development of children, improving their overall school readiness, and providing early intervention services. Students with disabilities are also disproportionately impacted by zero-tolerance school discipline policies. As president, I will support schools in increasing the number of school mental health personnel and provide schools with resources to train teachers and administrators in positive behavioral interventions, trauma-informed alternative discipline practices, and implicit bias to limit suspensions, expulsions, and minor-infraction arrests.

A. CURRICULUM AND TRANSITION

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

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

My first job out of college was teaching students with speech and learning disabilities at a public elementary school. I know how important it is for our public education system to create opportunities for all kids, including students with disabilities. That's why I'm a co-sponsor of the Keep Our Promise to America's Children and Teachers Act, which would fully fund the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act and make sure education is a priority in the federal budget.

We must also make sure people with disabilities are not held down by student loan debt. That's why I've called for something truly transformational – up to \$50,000 in student loan debt cancellation for 42 million Americans and universal free public college and technical school. My plan would provide total debt cancellation to more than 75% of student loan borrowers. And it would make college truly universal – not just in theory, but in practice – by making higher education of all kinds more inclusive and available to every single American, including people with disabilities, without the need to take on debt to cover costs. I've also co-sponsored legislation to prohibit the Treasury Department from forcing borrowers who are severely disabled from paying taxes on student loans that have been canceled.

Finally, we need to do everything we can to ensure that all students, regardless of means or background, have access to career training that will provide a path to a good-paying job and a middle-class lifestyle. That's why I introduced and passed the Free Career and Technical Education for High School Students Act in order to direct federal funding streams toward reducing or eliminating out-of-pocket costs associated with Career and Technical Education programs for high school students, including students with disabilities. If classes that prepare high school students for college are free, then career training classes that prepare students to enter the workforce should also be free. I have also introduced bipartisan legislation that would expand education savings accounts to cover apprentices' out-of-pocket costs, such as for equipment and books.

B. 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.

- 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?

Yes, I strongly support these reforms. I co-sponsored the Safe Schools and Improvement Act, which would specifically ban bullying and harassment based on a student's actual or perceived disability, along with several other characteristics. This bill would also ensure schools focus on preventing and responding to bullying and harassment both at school and online, and it would require data reporting on incidents of bullying and harassment to the Department of Education. As president, I will fight for these reforms – and sign them into law.

C. 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

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

I am strongly opposed to the use of restraints in schools – and I would support reforms to ensure that no student is restrained or subjected to the horrific behavior named in those reports.

D. Educational Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

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

- What steps will you take to expand access to the general education classroom and broader inclusion for students with disabilities?
- What would you do to make sure students with disabilities have accessible curriculum and that teachers have the support they need to provide it?

New technologies hold the promise of greater accessibility for students with disabilities. Electronic delivery systems and electronic course materials can more easily adapt to the needs of individual learners. However, not all technologies at use in our schools are accessible to students with disabilities, even though non-discrimination laws require accessibility. To close the achievement gap, we must make sure our public education system creates opportunity for all our kids, including students with disabilities. That’s why I passed an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization to ensure that students with disabilities are able to use assistive technology to access assessments. It’s also why I introduced the bipartisan AIM HIGH Act to create guidelines for accessible instructional materials on college campuses. I recognize that many students face special obstacles to their education, and I will always stand up for programs that help to level the playing field. I will also make sure that teachers and paraprofessionals have the resources and training they need to provide accessible curriculum and learning opportunities for all students.

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 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

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/>.

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>

- 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. The civil rights of all Americans will be a top priority for my administration. All people have a right to live a life of dignity and independence. We must recommit to fighting to see this promise truly fulfilled for the disability community.

- 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?

To ensure people with disabilities can live full, independent lives we must invest in big structural change. My affordable housing plan would build or rehabilitate 3.2 million new low- and moderate-income housing units, bringing rents down for people with disabilities and their caregivers and ensuring that they can afford to live in the communities they call home. My plan also expands the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination based on the source a person's income, including those who receive government assistance or housing vouchers.

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.

A. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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

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

Accessible public transportation ensures that people with disabilities can safely commute to work. I helped to secure over \$9 million in federal grants to make vital improvements to the dock at the Hingham Ferry Terminal in Massachusetts, bringing the dock into full ADA compliance and ensuring that it is accessible to all riders. I also pushed for a \$16 million increase in funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to ensure that it has the resources it needs to fulfill its mission. My plan for rural America also establishes a \$25 billion dollar capital fund to support a menu of options for improving care in health professional shortage areas, including improving transportation to the nearest hospital or piloting models like mobile clinics and community paramedicine programs.

B. 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.

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

I have spoken out in favor of additional regulations for TNCs. People with disabilities should have access to these services. No company should be allowed to discriminate against people with disabilities, and it's our government's job to make sure they can't.

C. 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.

- 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?

I believe new mobility options should be fully accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, and I will work to pass and implement reforms that ensure this is the case, while consulting with and seeking input from individuals with disabilities.

D. 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.

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

I will fight to ensure that air travel is accessible for passengers with disabilities. I was an original co-sponsor of a bill that would strengthen the Air Carrier Access Act to include protections for the rights of passengers with disabilities by ensuring airplanes are designed to accommodate people with disabilities, holding airlines to accessibility standards, and taking action to close service gaps for passengers with disabilities. This bill would also create a private right of action for violations.

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.

A. 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 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.

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

I will fight to ensure full accessibility of federal agency websites, information, and technology, including by fully enforcing Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and partnering with outside experts and people with disabilities to ensure true compliance with these rules. I also support creating a National Office of Disability Coordination to help oversee the coordination of these agency activities to ensure that federal programs better work together to support people with disabilities in the United States.

B. 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.

- 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?
- 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, I will make sure every home in America has a fiber broadband connection at a price families can afford. That means publicly-owned and operated networks — and no giant ISPs running away with taxpayer dollars. I will allow municipalities to build their own broadband networks, create an Office of Broadband Access to manage a new \$85 billion federal grant program to massively expand broadband access, improve the accuracy of broadband maps, and prohibit the range of sneaky maneuvers giant private providers use to unfairly squeeze out competition, hold governments hostage, and drive up prices.

I will also ensure that every person has the skills to fully participate in our online economy. That's why I will work to pass the Digital Equity Act, which invests \$2.5 billion over ten years to help states develop digital equity plans and launch digital inclusion projects.

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.

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

As president, I will strengthen rules to require disaster response plans to uphold the rights of vulnerable populations. We'll also develop best practices at the federal level to help state and local governments develop plans for at-risk communities -- including for extreme heat or cold -- and require that evacuation services and shelters are fully accessible to people with disabilities. During emergencies, we will work to ensure that critical information is shared in ways that reflect the diverse needs of people with disabilities and other at-risk communities, including through ASL and Braille and languages spoken in the community. We will establish a National Commission on Disability Rights and Disasters, ensure that federal disaster spending is ADA compliant, and support people with disabilities in disaster planning. We will make certain that individuals can get health care if they have to leave their community or if there is a disruption in care. And we will ensure that a sufficient number of disability specialists are present in state emergency management teams and FEMA's disaster response corps.