**QUESTION 1: Do you have designated advisors and clear processes for making decisions on disability issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Decisions made on disability issues are civil rights issues. It is important to be educated on these issues so that more can be done to get the resources and education out to the population. It is because of the Americans with Disabilities Act that millions of people with disabilities are no longer denied access to education or to a decent living. Even though so much progress has been made since the ADA, there is still much to be done on the issue.

**QUESTION 2: Is your campaign accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming environment to all. Offices in our campaign headquarters are both on the first floor and the second floor of the building, and if a staff member or volunteer of the campaign has a disability that needs to be accommodated we are able to meet their needs.

**QUESTION 3:Do you have a proven record on improving or a plan to improve the lives of people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes.

* 1 in 5 Americans has a disability
* 30% of working age people with disabilities are in the workforce

It is important to give every American a chance to live a fulfilled life. More money needs to go towards accessible public transportation so that Americans with disabilities can get to the resources they need to live a successful and healthy life. Early testing for disabilities must be in place so that children can get access to resources earlier to give them even more of a head start. More businesses need to be trained and educated on people with disabilities so that the stigma behind being a working person with disability can be taken away. The American Dream must be accessible to all Americans, not just the few.

**QUESTION 4: Do you have a plan/commitment to reduce the stigmas about people with disabilities that are barriers to employment, independence and equality? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. There are several stigmas that need to be addressed and proven false about people with disabilities. For one, a Princeton study showed that a main concern of small/medium sized business is that staff members with disabilities will not be able to get work done. These smaller sized businesses also worry about the costs of accommodating staff who have disabilities. There needs to be an increase in disability awareness training for both managers and staff so that these stigmas can be resolved.

It was not until the 20th century that a majority of students with disabilities were no longer excluded from schools. This trend of more inclusiveness needs to continue even today. Still, Deaf children are not being recognized as being Deaf until later when the child’s speech and language skills have already been affected. All people deserve and education and the resources needed to live a full life.

**QUESTION 5: Do you have a proven record on enabling, or a plan to enable, people with disabilities to have jobs, careers and to start their own businesses? Do you have specific strategies for youth employment for people with disabilities and/or sector strategies such as jobs and careers in STEM, hospitality, healthcare and elder care? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes.

* 70% of people with disabilities who are working age want to work
* 11 million working age people with disabilities in America are living on government benefits, even though they want to become independent

There needs to be programs in place to allow Americans with disabilities to get the education needed so that they can become independent. Programs such as Project SEARCH help students with disabilities easily transition from school to work. Project SEARCH gives its students a 70% success rate of obtaining a competitive job to those who complete the program. More programs like these will help people with disabilities obtain the careers that they want to become independent members of society.

**QUESTION 6: Do you have a plan to enable students with disabilities, including those from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds, to receive the diagnosis, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and accommodations/services they need to succeed in school and be prepared for competitive employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. There is an overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs. This can be due to how some of the tests that are designed to determine a child’s intelligence are biased culturally. Tests that are designed to test a child’s intelligence need to be re-designed so that they can be more accurate when deciding an individualized Education Plan. There also must be an increase in testing for disabilities at a younger age so that a child can get the educational attention and resources needed for them to be successful later in life. More funding should be put into special education classes in areas that have been historically marginalized. A child with disabilities needs to have access to teachers with the experience and knowledge specifically needed to best fit their needs.

**QUESTION 7: Do you have a plan to reform the benefits system (Medicaid, Medicaid buyin) to enable people with disabilities to work to the best of their capacities without losing supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. It is due to assets and income restrictions that are put in place by Medicaid that keeps people with disabilities from working to the best of their capacities. If a person takes a job, they should not have to lose the government support that they desperately need. If someone is collecting Supplemental Security Income due to a disability, they are only allowed to have $2,000 in assets at most if single and $3,000 if married. If someone who is over this amount may not even have their disability claim fully evaluated and will receive a technical denial.

Having greater “Medicaid buy-in” options offered would allow those who have disabilities to move into paid work while also maintaining the health support they need.

**QUESTION 8: Do you have a plan to ensure people with disabilities are eligible for affordable health insurance regardless of preexisting conditions? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. Even though the Affordable Care Act plans must cover pre-existing conditions, such as healthcare coverage for disabilities, there are still people with disabilities being denied much needed accommodations. Ensuring that people get the full coverage they need will mean having more transparency between healthcare providers and people with disabilities. If someone is denied a necessary accommodation, there must be protocols in place to make sure that the person denied is given the accommodation they deserve.

**QUESTION 9: Do you have a plan to provide home and community-based services to people with disabilities who would rather live in their own homes instead of institutions, and have the community attendant supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. People with disabilities should have the rights to live in their own homes over institutions. The costs of institutionalization is often more expensive than personal care assistance. People with disabilities deserve the right to live in their own home without having to give up the personal care and attention that they need.

**QUESTION 10: Do you have a plan to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive services that would prevent them from being swept up into the criminal justice system, divert individuals with disabilities who are arrested to treatment options in lieu of jail where appropriate, receive needed accommodations in the criminal justice process and while incarcerated, and offer appropriate reentry support to help individuals with disabilities leaving jails and prisons reintegrate into their communities and secure jobs? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. The Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that, 32% of federal inmates and 40% of prisoners in jail have at least 1 disability. On top of that, the experience of incarceration can worsen pre-existing mental health conditions. There needs to be an increase in education for staff working in jails and prisons so that they can be trained on the appropriate actions to take when accommodating someone incarcerated with a disability. If an inmate is in a situation where being incarcerated will worsen their pre-existing mental health conditions, they should be placed in a more appropriate environment for their rehabilitation back into the general population. Programs specifically for inmates released with disabilities should be in place so that they can continue getting the treatment they need to be integrated back into society as well as help with obtaining and keeping a job.

**QUESTION 11: People with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of crime as those without disabilities. People with disabilities also are far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood as defiant behavior. Do you have a plan to address these issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. Each year approximately 375 to 500 people with mental health problems are shot and killed by the police. Police officers need better education and training on how to appropriately respond to an individual with disabilities. Some mental health conditions and disabilities can be taken as signs of intoxication instead, and so a police officer might have the wrong response to the situation. Police officers need to be trained to respond appropriately to all situations so that they can protect all citizens.

**QUESTION 12: Both children and adults with disabilities are more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Do you have a plan to address this issue? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**

* Around 59,000 adults with disabilities are sexually assaulted or raped each year (National Crime Victimization Survey)
* Adults with disabilities are 68% more likely to be a victim of sexual assault or rape (National Crime Victimization Survey)
* 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime (Courage Above All: Sexual Assault Against Women with Disabilities)
* Half of adults with cognitive disabilities are more likely to experience 10 or more sexually abusive incidents in their lifetime (Courage Above All: Sexual Assault Against Women with Disabilities)

There must be an increase of self-defense training for people with disabilities when teaching self-advocacy skills. There should be more education on resources that people with disabilities can go to when seeking assistance. This increase in resources available to people with disabilities would start addressing these issues and hopefully decrease these incidents.

**QUESTION 13: Do you have a plan for veterans with disabilities facing barriers transitioning from active duty to civilian employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes.

* 25% of recent veterans have reported service-connected disabilities, compared to 13% of all veterans
* Common injuries among veterans are missing limbs, PTSD, hearing loss, spinal cord injuries, burns, as well as other impairments

While there are acts put in place to protect veterans from employment discrimination, such as the Uniformed Services Employment Reemployment Rights Act; veterans still need greater resources available to go to while they are transitioning back into civilian life. Programs that allow for veterans to receive job training and job assistance need to be more accessible to veterans with disabilities. In addition we have to provide greater services for veterans who return home in order to help them with disabilities they receive, both physical and mental.

**QUESTION 14: Do you have a plan for accessible, affordable, integrated housing to allow people with disabilities to live in the communities where they work or are seeking work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. Without having affordable and safe housing options for people with disabilities, there will be an increase in population of those who reside in homeless shelters, public institutions, and unsafe care homes. There must be an increase in affordable public housing options for people with disabilities. The lack options that are available now will only continue stripping these people of their civil rights.

**QUESTION 15: Do you have a plan to address the lack of accessible transportation options that is a barrier to work for people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes.

* Out of 15 million people who have trouble getting transportation in the US, 6 million (or 40%) are people with disabilities.
* Around 560,000 people with disabilities do not leave their home due to difficulties getting transportation.  
  Lack of funding for transportation options in rural communities only adds to the difficulties of people with disabilities in rural areas.
* Even after the passage of the ADA, there are still gaps and barriers still in place for people with disabilities.

An increase in public transportation funding will allow for people with disabilities to have much needed access to education, employment, housing, participation in their local community, as well as health care. A lack of transportation will only continue the alienation of people with disabilities in our society. There also needs to be more accountability in areas that have not integrated and more options of accessible transportation for people with disabilities.

**QUESTION 16: Do you have a plan to advance innovations (i.e., assistive technologies, devices) that can help people with disabilities become more successfully employed, productive and independent? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. With the great progress that has been made with assistive technologies and devices, there still must be work done in that area. More of this technology must be advanced and distributed to those who need it but cannot afford it. By continuing this advancement, more people with disabilities will be able to integrate better into their workplace environment to become both more productive and independent.