Ms. Mizrahi,

Thank you so much to reaching out to me on this important issue. With one in five Americans having some kind of disability, this is an issue that touches just about every family across Montana and the country.

Let me start by saying that my wife and I believe that to whom much is given, much is required, and we strongly believe that every person with a disability should have every opportunity to enjoy a high quality of life. Our family foundation has donated to a number of organizations that help persons with disabilities, such as Reach Out and Care Wheels that builds custom wheel chairs for children.

I’m also a businessman, not a career politician. In business, it’s imperative that you hire the best people for available jobs. At RightNow Technologies (the business my wife and I founded), we hired and promoted all different kinds of people, including a number of people with disabilities, based on one criteria: their ability to do the job. We made accommodations for employees with disabilities as needed.

When I’m governor, two of my primary focus areas will be education and jobs. I think these are areas that are vitally important to all Montanans, especially those with disabilities. These are also connected issues.

I believe that the goal in education should be to help every child reach their full potential. For students with disabilities, they need to be taught valuable skills just like anyone else. This is the great thing about technology, and why one of my primary goals is to get computer science into every high school. Particularly for students with physical disabilities, this provides a great skill that is in demand.

We also have to recognized that students with disabilities have special educational needs. This is why I supported a bill in our last session that would have allowed parents of special needs students to establish educational savings accounts. The ESA’s would give parents and students more options to find the right school for them in their community. Unfortunately, the current governor vetoed it.

If we get education right for persons with disabilities, then the job picture becomes a lot easier. If disabled people have skills that are in demand, they’ll be hired. That’s just good business.

As we all know, there is great dignity in having a job, and I fully support making reforms to our social safety net to remove perverse incentives that punish people for working. No one should have the rug pulled out from under them simply because they want to work and improve their situation.

Finally, as governor, my door will always be open to the ideas of all Montanans, including those with disabilities. I look forward to working with this community, hearing their ideas, and finding solutions that improve the lives of Montanans with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Greg Gianforte
Candidate for Governor of Montana