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

**ANSWER:**Yes. I have a senior advisor who is dedicated specifically to developing policy proposals on disability issues. He also advises me on how various policy changes will impact people with disabilities, and he is particularly focused on legislation that is pending in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), which is the principal committee in the United States Senate for disability policy.

In addition, each of my policy advisors understand the importance of these issues to me and to the people of North Carolina, and they understand the imperative of considering how a change in any policy can uniquely impact people with disabilities.

Moreover, my Legislative Director was one of the key staffers in Congress who worked on the **Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act**, and she has been recognized as being instrumental to the passage of the ABLE Act: <http://www.ndss.org/About-NDSS/Newsroom/Recent-News/ABLE-Act-Becomes-the-Law-of-the-Land-/>.

Since the passage of the ABLE Act in 2014, my staff has continued working with the disability advocacy community and with other congressional staff to oversee the implementation of the ABLE Act. My staff have also developed new legislative proposals to expand the benefits of the ABLE Act, which I have recently introduced in the Senate. You can read more about my proposals here: <https://www.burr.senate.gov/press/releases/senate-and-house-members-announce-bipartisan-bicameral-legislation-to-expand-able-accounts>.

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

**ANSWER:**Yes. My campaign office is fully accessible to people with disabilities, and I welcome the support of all North Carolinians who want to join me in making our nation’s laws more inclusive and supportive of people with disabilities. This is one of the key messages of my campaign.

I have fought hard to change our laws in order to expand opportunities for people with disabilities. This is a passion of mine, and I will continue fighting to tear down the barriers that currently stand in the way of people with disabilities who are striving to achieve the American Dream.

**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. Improving the lives of people with disabilities has been a central part of my legislative agenda. My record has been nationally recognized by organizations like Autism Speaks, the National Down Syndrome Society, and The Arc.

My work includes co-authoring the **ABLE Act**, which has been heralded as one of the most important pieces of legislation affecting people with disabilities since the Americans with Disabilities Act. I’m proud of my work on the ABLE Act, and believe it is a significant step in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

This year, I introduced legislation to expand the ABLE Act, including the **ABLE to Work Act**, the **ABLE Financial Planning Act**, and the **ABLE Age Adjustment Act**. More information can be found here: <http://opinion.injo.com/2016/05/256105-helped-recent-guest-amy-schumers-show-work-towards-american-dream/>.

I have also worked with the Department of Education to make commonsense changes to how federal financial aid for higher education is available to students with disabilities. Because of my work, more students with disabilities are able to use federal assistance and Pell Grants to pursue higher education.

I have been advocating for **Kevin and Avonte’s Law**, which would provide resources to help families locate loved ones with conditions that make them prone to wandering away from caregivers.

Furthermore, I voted for the following laws:

* Every Student Succeeds Act
* Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
* Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008
* Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008
* 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act
* Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004
* Help America Vote Act (HAVA)

**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. As a senior member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), I worked closely with my colleagues to pass the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014**, which took many positive steps toward strengthening the transitions for individuals with disabilities between education and employment, as well as increased work-based support through our federal job-training programs geared toward Americans with disabilities. This means people with disabilities will have a greater opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and competitive integrated employment, which will ultimately enhance their life opportunities. For this, I was pleased to support WIOA.

In addition, earlier this year, I introduced the **ABLE to Work Act**, a bill that specifically promotes employment and independence for people with disabilities. It lifts the annual contribution limit to ABLE accounts for those individuals who have a job and save their earnings. It also makes ABLE contributions eligible for the Saver’s Credit, which is an existing federal tax credit for retirement savings for low and middle income workers. This tax credit would provide an annual savings match of as much as $1,000 (single) and $2,000 (married).

**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. Since 2007, I have worked with Beyond Academics in Greensboro, North Carolina, to expand the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) program, which strengthens the transition from postsecondary education to jobs. TPSID provides grants to colleges and universities with a demonstrated commitment to helping students with disabilities achieve. From there, colleges and universities partner with nonprofits, such as Beyond Academics, to set high expectations for students and an ingrained culture that every student will not only graduate, but will move on to competitive integrated employment. I was honored to be the first commencement speaker for this partnership and to see first-hand how this program, through the use of TPSID, has increased the number of students graduating who go into the workforce. This is one of my most treasured accomplishments.

Additionally, I supported WIOA, which placed a renewed emphasis on Title II’s Youth Employment Program by placing greater resources in job-training for in-school and out-of-school youth who are seeking job-training opportunities. These opportunities, in addition to WIOA’s Title V disabilities provisions, will hopefully open doors of opportunity for people with disabilities for jobs of today and the future.

**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. First, I was deeply involved in the development of the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, which encourages greater use of early identification and accommodations for students with disabilities. I have long believed that schools have an important role to play in identifying the needs of students, addressing them, and setting high expectations that lead to academic success. I was pleased my bipartisan legislation was included in ESSA that would encourage school districts to use Title I dollars for these purposes. To me, this is a positive step toward ensuring students are getting these appropriate accommodations early and frequently in their school work.

As a long-time supporter of IDEA, I also believe it is Congress’ responsibility to fully-fund IDEA. Although I believe there have been many positive investments made over the years in our education spending, it is with deep concern that I have seen funds diverted from Part B of IDEA to other spending priorities. I continue to believe this is a misstep and one I look forward to addressing during IDEA’s upcoming reauthorization.

Also, I continue to hear from parents that the IEP process is not completely meeting their needs. Although states have great responsibility under IDEA to ensure their state plans and procedures are followed, I, along with my staff, continue to monitor these plans and the U.S. Department of Education’s enforcement to ensure that this is always the case.

**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. One of my greatest legislative achievements was the **ABLE Act**. Under the ABLE Act, people with disabilities will be able to establish ABLE accounts that allow them to hold assets without losing eligibility for SSI (up to $100,000), Medicaid, and other public benefits. Before the ABLE Act, people with disabilities faced losing their benefits – benefits they need to survive and get medical care – if they had more than $2,000 in assets to their name. This limit was consigning people with disabilities to a life of poverty, a policy that I found to be unjust and immoral. But thanks to the ABLE Act, people with disabilities will now have the ability to save and build assets without losing supports.

I have also introduced the **ABLE to Work Act**, which would promote employment for people with disabilities, and I am continuing to seek out new ways that we can enable people with disabilities to have jobs and careers without losing access to the critical services they need to live with dignity. I have also introduced legislation called the **ABLE Age Adjustment Act**, which would allow Americans who acquire a disability later in life to be eligible for an ABLE account.

I support the continuity of care for individuals with disabilities in order to better their daily quality of life. Last year, I proposed a blueprint that included provisions to strengthen and improve Medicaid. All Americans, including people on Medicaid, should have the same access to the best health care available.

**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. Under my health care reform blueprint, the Patient CARE Act, no one could be denied health insurance based on a pre-existing condition. My proposal would also prohibit insurance companies from imposing lifetime limits on a consumer, which is important to people with disabilities who may incur significant health care expenses over the course of their lifetime. I believe all Americans, including people with disabilities, should have access to quality and affordable health care.

**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. I strongly support individuals being able to receive care in their home and in community-based settings. It is understandable why so many people want to receive care in a home or a community-based setting instead of an institution, and I believe we must support people with disabilities being able to receive care in these settings.

I have been a strong supporter of the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which provides coordinated services to vulnerable individuals in their communities, many of whom are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. I cosponsored legislation (S. 1362) to expand PACE, which was signed into law in November 2015.

Medical research also plays a critical role in developing innovations that will allow people with disabilities to receive care and services in home and community-based settings. I am proud to have led the annual, bipartisan effort in the Senate to ensure robust funding for the National Institutes of Health, which includes the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, so that we can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. In addition, I introduced the Advancing Breakthrough Devices for Patients Act (S. 1077) to ensure that people with disabilities are able to benefit from cutting-edge medical technologies as soon as possible.

Furthermore, I have consistently fought to protect people with disabilities’ access to complex rehab technology wheelchairs and accessories through the Medicare program, including by cosponsoring legislation this Congress like the Patient Access and Medicare Protection Act.

**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. At the federal level, our justice system is administered by federal judges, U.S. attorneys, and U.S. Marshals, positions of considerable authority and discretion. These positions must be confirmed by the Senate. As a Senator, I have sought to support candidates for these positions who will carry out the law with integrity and with a respect for and awareness of people with disabilities.

Furthermore, I support fairer sentencing and am a cosponsor of the **Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act**(S. 2123), which is supported by the National Disability Rights Network (<http://www.ndrn.org/en/public-policy/justice-system/571-press-release-sentencing-reform-and-corrections-act.html>). This legislation places limits on juveniles in solitary confinement, provides terms for compassionate release, and provides support for those who are imprisoned. I will continue championing this bill, promoting the concept of fair sentencing, and enabling those who are in the criminal justice system to move forward as healthy, productive citizens.

Additionally, it is imperative that DNA evidence is analyzed to provide a full picture of a crime scene in order to determine the perpetrator. Too often, DNA evidence has not been reviewed, and this can lead to false convictions, including those of people with disabilities. One such example occurred in North Carolina, when two half-brothers with intellectual disabilities spent decades in jail for a crime they did not commit. It was only through DNA testing 30 years later that they were exonerated. I am a cosponsor of the **Justice for All Reauthorization Act**, which includes the DNA testing program that led to these individuals being declared innocent.

**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. News reports over the past few years have included tragic accounts of the deaths of people with disabilities during confrontations with police, and this is something that we must take seriously. I support full funding for programs to train our law enforcement officers so that they are properly prepared for interactions with people with disabilities.

I am also a cosponsor of **Kevin and Avonte’s Law**, a bill aimed at helping to locate special needs children and adults who have conditions that give them a higher tendency to wander from caregivers. Kevin and Avonte’s Law would provide grants to assist law enforcement in planning programs to prevent wandering and to locate missing individuals. I believe this legislation provides an important component in promoting understanding between law enforcement and people with disabilities, and I am pleased that it recently passed the Senate.

I also believe it is important that we recognize the propensity of people with disabilities to be victims of crime, and to provide them with appropriate support services when they are victims. For example, the State Department has noted that individuals with disabilities are particularly at risk of being trafficking victims, and I have worked to stop human trafficking both in the United States and around the globe and to provide support for survivors. I’m also proud to have supported programs like the Department of Justice’s Training and Services to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities Grant Program, which was established in the Violence Against Women Act in 2000.

**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:**Yes. I believe one of the fundamental tasks of government is to protect the vulnerable, and protecting individuals with disabilities from those who commit the heinous crimes of rape and sexual assault is an issue I have made a top priority during my time in the Senate. Congress recently passed legislation I introduced, the **Military Sex Offender Reporting Act**, which closes a significant loophole that previously allowed some sex offenders to evade registration with the National Sex Offender Registry. Ensuring that sex offenders are registered and known is an important part of protecting the vulnerable from becoming victims of those who commit these horrific crimes, and I am currently working to provide strong oversight to ensure that these provisions are being implemented.

I am also committed to ensuring that the perpetrators who commit these crimes against people with disabilities are discovered, prosecuted, and prevented from reoffending. I have cosponsored legislation to ensure that rape kits are tested so that the perpetrators can be convicted, and I have supported laws providing resources to track down sex offenders who do not register.

**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. I believe the first step is to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is providing quality, timely health care to veterans with disabilities. As the Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I helped write legislation in 2014 to address the VA health care crisis. This law established the Veterans Choice Program and provided $5 billion in additional resources to enhance VA facilities and hire more medical providers at the VA.

I recently introduced the **Veterans Choice Improvement Act**to take additional steps to reduce the hassles and delays veterans are still experiencing in getting medical care. This is a matter of utmost importance to veterans with disabilities.

Transitioning veterans need access to education to facilitate their transition to civilian employment. The **Post 9/11 GI Bill**is a tremendous program that has helped many veterans and their family members, and I have been proud to support it.

I have also championed legislation to ensure that disabled veterans are able to access services like the Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program. Too often, veterans facing the toughest barriers to employment were not able to access the very services designed for them.

I have also introduced the **Careers for Veterans Act**to ensure veterans are able to take advantage of the skills they acquired in the military and transition them to licenses and credentials needed for civilian employment. Further, the bill would require the federal government to hire 10,000 qualified veterans and give preference to disabled veterans.

**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. No state has been hit harder by the lack of affordable housing than North Carolina, and there has been no exception for people with disabilities. Further challenging this is the large number of veterans who return to North Carolina with service-related disabilities who are just looking for a place to call home. As the Ranking

Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I addressed these challenges in many ways. For one, I was the author of the **Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act**, which expands the definition of “Chronically Homeless” to include veterans who meet certain disability thresholds in order to be eligible for homeless services.

Additionally, I authored the **Veterans’ Benefits Enhancement Act**, which provides federal assistance to veterans who have a service-related disability to make structural modifications and rehabilitations to their homes in order to accommodate their disability and make their homes more accessible.

In addition, one of the benefits of the ABLE Act is that it allows ABLE accounts to be used to cover the costs of housing, including rent, mortgage payments, improvements and modifications.

Finally, I have long supported Section 822, the Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program. This program is critical to helping those with disability afford a home. I will continue to support robust funding for this program.

**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. We need to focus greater attention on the availability of accessible options for people with disabilities at the local level.

At the federal level, the conversation on disability and transportation is almost exclusively about larger cities. Often overlooked is the severe lack of transportation options in medium and small communities. These cities need funds to replace older buses and vans that are currently not ADA compliant. I worked with my colleagues in the Senate to increase the pool of money available to these cities through the Bus and Bus Facilities Competitive Grant Program. This will allow smaller municipalities to provide transportation options that are ADA compliant. For too long, transportation funding has focused on larger cities, leaving millions of people with disabilities with limited options.

Additionally, as governments make budgetary decisions. I believe people with disabilities should not be adversely impacted when fares are increased for mass transit systems. For example, I worked with the Charlotte Area Transit System after receiving a constituent complaint about proposed fare hikes. Following conversations I facilitated between the constituent and the city, the Metropolitan Transit Commission recommended against making the change that could have adversely impacted people with disabilities in the community.

I should also note that one of the benefits of the ABLE Act is that it allows ABLE accounts to be used to cover transportation expenses, including transit fares, the purchase of a vehicle, or making modifications to a vehicle.

**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. Innovation is critical to promoting greater independence and quality of life for people with disabilities. I believe strongly that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) must be able to bring forward and provide coverage for the most cutting-edge technologies.

I have supported policies that spur innovation throughout my service in Congress. Last year, I co-authored the Innovation for Healthier Americans report to ensure that Congress focused on how we could do a better job bringing forward cutting-edge innovations for the people who need them. I introduced the Advancing Breakthrough Devices for Patients Act (S. 1077) to ensure that people with disabilities are able to benefit from cutting-edge medical technologies as soon as possible. This bipartisan legislation will encourage and spur innovation.

The public-private partnerships supported through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) also play a critical role in advancing technologies. I am proud to have led the annual, bipartisan effort in the Senate to ensure robust funding for the NIH, which includes the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, so we can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. I have also consistently fought to protect people with disabilities’ access to innovative technologies and the care they need in the Medicare program, including complex rehab technology wheelchairs and accessories.

In addition, the ABLE Act allows ABLE accounts to be used to pay for assistive technology, personal assistance supports and durable medical equipment.

**QUESTION 17: In your foreign policy and national security plan, do you plan to continue America’s tradition of standing up for the rights of oppressed people, including people with disabilities, around the world? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I have always believed that the United States has a responsibility to set the highest possible standard for how we treat all people, including those with disabilities.

One excellent example of promoting understanding is through the Special Olympics. I have been a longtime, consistent supporter of the **Eunice Kennedy Shriver Special Olympics Act**because I believe the games provide a wonderful opportunity not only for the athletes to develop skills and compete, but also for America to showcase its leadership in disability rights. I have been honored by the Special Olympics of North Carolina for my work in promoting the Special Olympics, a distinction I am humbled to receive.

The United States also has the ability to influence the behavior of other nations in how they treat their citizens. It is important that America’s leaders continue to use every opportunity in international fora to speak out on behalf of the oppressed, including people with disabilities who are being mistreated.